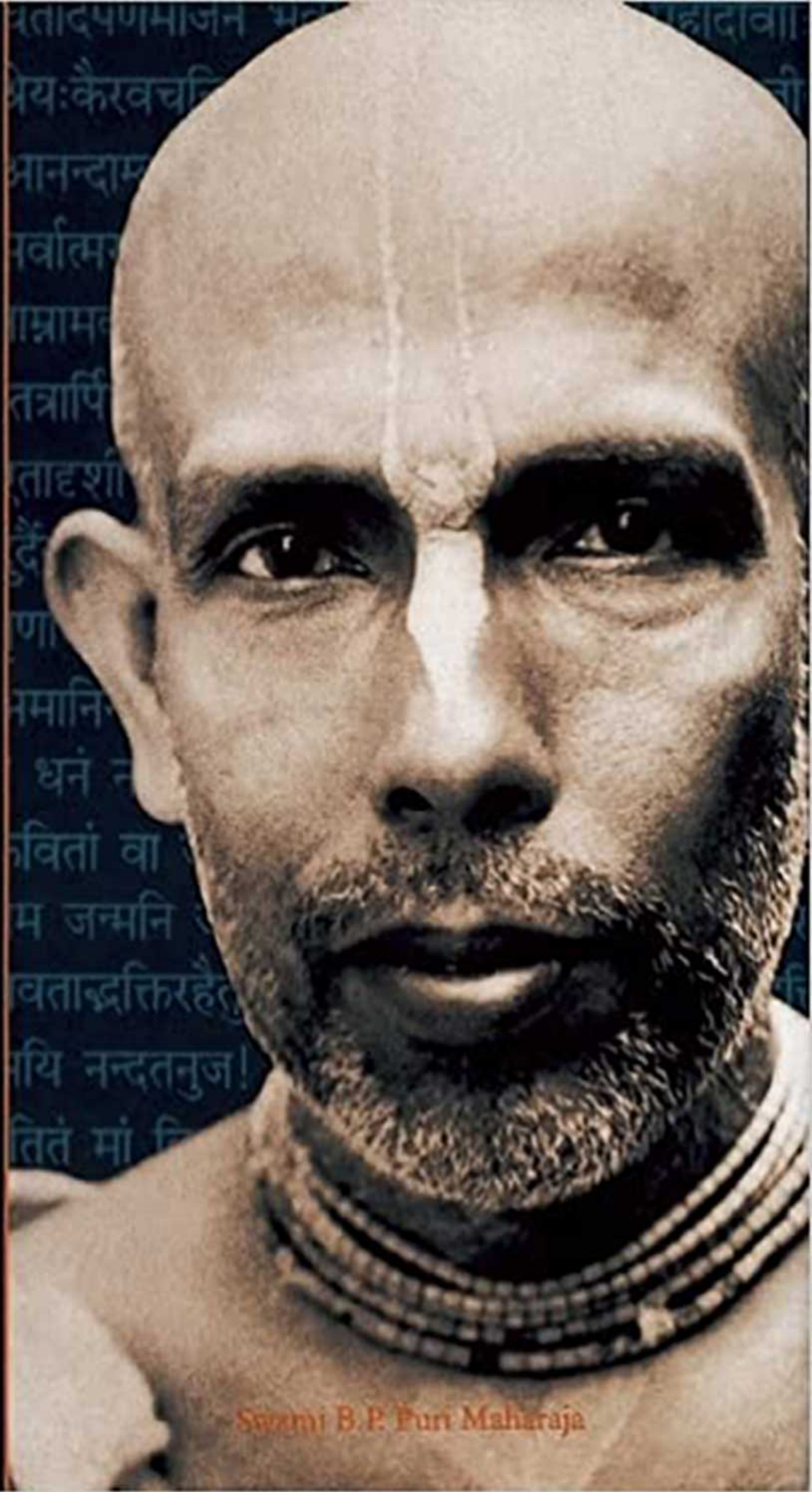


ART OF SADHANA

a guide to daily devotion



Swami B. P. Puri Maharaja

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A GUIDE OF DAILY DEVOTION

By Srila Bhakti Pramoda Puri Goswami Maharaja

INTRODUCTION

*guru vaisnava bhagavan tinera smarana tinera smarane haya vighna-
vinasana anayase haya nija vanchita purana*

"I meditate on the guru, the Vaishnavas, and the Lord. By remembering them, all obstacles are destroyed and one quickly attains the fulfillment of all desires."
(*Chaitanya Charitamrta 1.1.20-21*)

With these words, Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami begins his *Chaitanya Charitamrta*. This prayer is his *mangalacarana*, or auspicious invocation. Following in Krishnadasa's footsteps we invoke the mercy of *gurudeva*. By remembering Krishna, "the abode of all good fortune," in accordance with the directions of His devotees, it is possible to quickly attain the Lord's mercy.

yasya prasada bhagavat-prasada yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto'pi

"The guru is the best of Krishna's devotees and non-different from His beloved Radharani. Therefore when guru is pleased, Krishna is also pleased."

The conclusion of the *mahajanas* is that there is no way of gaining the Lord's pleasure other than through the guru. Thus, we pray that our beloved gurudeva be pleased with us and that the devotees of Krishna, all of whom, as His expansions, are non-different from Him, will also look upon us with pleasure. We pray that their combined mercy will result in our obtaining the great fortune of Krishna's satisfaction. May Sri Guru, Gauranga, Gandharvika, and Giridhari be ever glorious, and may they bestow all auspiciousness upon us.

In the *Mahabharata*, King Yudhisthira and the other Pandavas were challenged

to answer questions by Yamaraja, who had disguised himself as a heron. Of the five brothers, only Yudhisthira was able to answer all the questions, thus passing Yamaraja's test. In answer to the question about the genuine spiritual path, the eldest Pandava stated that only the path followed by the mahajanas was free of all obstacles, and that everyone should therefore cast aside all intellectual criticism and simply follow that path. Anyone who disregards the path of the *mahajana's* for another will soon find that they are no longer headed toward the divine abode, Goloka, but rather in the completely opposite direction — toward a hellish existence. It is therefore necessary for us to ascertain who the mahajanas are, find the path they have left for us, and learn how we should follow it. This path is the "art of *sadhana*"—the means to achieving the supreme goal of spiritual life.

While recounting the story of Ajamila in the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* sixth canto, Sukadeva names twelve mahajanas, all of whom are said to know the inner secrets of the path to God. These mahajanas are Svayambhu, Narada, Sambhu, the four Kumaras, Kapila, Manu, Prahlada, Janaka, Bhishma, Bah, Vaiyasaki and Yamaraja. The Kapila spoken of here is the son of Kardama and Devahuti and not the atheistic author of Sakhya philosophy. All of these great personalities were followers of the path of devotion and all of them demonstrated, each in his own way, the excellence of this path.

*bhagavan brahma kartsnyena trir anviksya manlsaya tad adhyavasyat
kutastho ratir atman yato bhavet*

"Lord Brahma, for instance, carefully studied the *Vedic* literature three times and came to the conclusion that attachment to the Supreme Self is the Vedic literature's ultimate goal." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 2.2.34)

Just as munis read a scripture two or three times over in order to understand it properly, so Brahma also decided to play the part of a seeker, even though he is all-knowing. He thus took on the character of a muni—just as it is said in the *Srutis*, *sa munir bhutva samacintayat*, "He became a muni and started to think carefully." Brahma carefully studied the Vedas three times in their entirety just to show how difficult it is to extract the essence of the scriptures and find their ultimate meaning. When Brahma completed his study he came to the conclusion that attachment to the Supreme Lord Hari, or *bhakti-yoga*, is the genuine fruit of such scholarly research.

na hy ato 'nyah sivah pantha visatah samsmrtav iha vasudeve bhagavati bhakti-yogo yato bhavet

"There is no more auspicious a path for the souls who have entered the world of repeated birth and death than the path which leads to Lord Vasudeva's devotional service." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 2.2.33)

Although there are many paths to liberation, none is more reasonable, easily performed or safer than the process by which one pleases the Supreme Lord and, as a result, attains devotion or love for His lotus feet. There is no doubt that direct devotional service is superior to other processes such as karma-yoga, by which one offers' the results of one's activities to the Lord.

The superiority of devotional service over other paths of spiritual life is clearly stated in the concluding verses of the *Bhagavad-gita's* sixth chapter: *tapasvibhyo'dhikoyogi* (6.46) *mayoginam api sarvesam* (6.47). Furthermore, the most confidential instructions of the Lord, at the end of the Gita's eighteenth chapter (*man-mana bhava and sarva-dharman parityajya*), also indicate clearly that the ultimate goal of the Vedic literature is Bhakti yoga.

Many conflicting ideas about religion have developed throughout history. According to the authority of the *SrimadBhagavatam* (1.2.6), however, the ultimate religious activity for all human beings is devotion to the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna, who lies beyond empirical validation. At its apex, such devotion (characterized by activities such as hearing and chanting about Krishna) must be causeless; that is, the performer should be free from any selfish motive. Devotion must also be uninhibited; nothing must be allowed to interfere with its performance, and it must be independent and spontaneous.

In the sixth canto of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, it is said that bhakti, devotional service, is primarily executed in the form of *sankirtana*:

etavan eva loke 'smin pumsam dharmah parah smrtah bhakti-yogo bhagavati tan-nama-grahanadibhih

"Therefore, the supreme religious activity for people in this world is devotional service to the Lord, performed by such acts as repeating His divine names." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 6.3.22)

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also confirmed this statement from the *Bhagavatam*

in His own words:

*bhajanera madhye srestha nava-vidha bhakti krsna-prema, krsna dite dhare
maha-sakti tara madhye sarva-srestha nama-sankirtana niraparadhe laile nama
paya prema-dhana*

"Of the many ways of executing devotional service, there are nine varieties which are considered to be the best, for they possess a great capacity to deliver love for Krishna and thus Krishna Himself. Of these nine processes of devotional service, the most important is the chanting of the Lord's Holy Name, for if one chants without committing offenses, the treasure of love for the Lord will be obtained." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.4.70-71)

In the twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita*, it is said that remembering, contemplating and meditating on the Lord depends on inner purification; thus, these activities are not easily perfected by ordinary people. On the other hand, since *sankirtana* is an activity executed by the external senses, it is within the grasp of anyone, even the disturbed human beings of this Age of Kali. The most merciful Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who appeared in this age to give the great gift of love of God in the mood of Krishna's associates in Vraja, testified to this end when He emotionally embraced His most confidential associates,

Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Raya, and said:

*harse prabhu kahena suna svarupa rama-raya nama-sankirtana kalau paramo,
upaya*

"Chanting the Holy Names is the supreme means of salvation in this age of Kali"
(*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3 208)

From this statement we can easily understand that the Lord invested some special powers in the chanting of His Holy Names in this particularly fortunate age of Kali. This special power is its capacity to awaken affectionate attachment or *raga* for the Lord. This is thus the best process by which one can develop *raga-bhakti*, or devotional service in spontaneous affection.

Even though Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has stated that through devotional service based on rules and regulations one cannot attain the type of love of God that is found in Vraja, (*vidhi-bhaktye vraja-bhavapate nahi sakti— Chaitanya Charitamrta* 13 15), if one takes up *harinama-sankirtana* on the *vidhi-bhakti*

platform according to the directions given by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, then one will quickly attain the qualifications necessary for the inner awakening of such a spontaneous service attitude Mahaprabhu told Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Raya how one should chant the Holy Name in order to awaken his dormant love for Krishna:

trnad api sumcena taror iva sahisnuna amanina manadena kirtamyah sada harih

"One should chant the Holy Name of the Lord while thinking oneself to be lower than the grass He should be more tolerant than the tree, take no respect for oneself and give all respect to others " (Chaitanya Charitamrta 3 20 21)

Thus, if anyone follows Mahaprabhu's direction and chants the Holy Name in the manner described in this verse, he or she will quickly develop transcendental greed or intense hankering Such greed, which mirrors the eternal attachment that the residents of Vraja have for their Lord, is the price that one must pay to purchase a consciousness imbued with devotional sentiment This is called *raganuga bhakti*, and it is the merciful manifestation of Krishna's pleasure potency, *hladini-sakti*.

Expertise in devotional service is measured by the extent to which one is able to satisfy the senses of the Lord An advanced devotee who has this expertise is one who has taken exclusive shelter of Krishna He is free from any tendency to criticize others, and seeks only to be absorbed in the pastimes of the Divine Couple of Vraja Such a devotee is very dear to Krishna and is certainly rare in this world To see such a devotee, to associate with him, or to serve him are manifestations of good fortune on a level seldom experienced Only if Krishna bestows His mercy on someone can he experience the blessing of such association To inform everyone of this important aspect of spiritual life, *mahajanas* such as Bhaktivinoda Thakura have prayed for the contact of a person who is expert in devotional service:

kabe sri caitanya more karibena daya kabe ami paiba vaisnava-pada-chaya

"When will Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu be merciful unto me? When will I find shelter in the shade of a Vaishnava's lotus feet?"

(Kalyana-kalpataru, Dainyamayi prarthana, 1)

This kind of consciousness, imbued with a taste for devotion to Krishna, is obtained by the grace of a great soul who has traveled the *raganuga bhakti* path. Millions and millions of births filled with pious acts will not bring about the same result.

After taking shelter of a spiritual master, one should engage with absolute dedication in the worship of the Holy Name, in the association of devotees and in the deepest solitude. Through this worship, the devotee's understanding of the object of worship (*upasaya*), the worshiper (*upasaka*) and the process of worship (*upasana*) will be clarified. This advancement in spiritual life will awaken an intense desire or spiritual greed to attain the mood of Krishna's associates in Vraja. Even so, everyone should remember the warning of the Katha Upanishad:

ksurasya dhara nisita duratyaya durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti

"The path of spiritual realization is very difficult; it is sharp like a razor's edge. That is the opinion of learned transcendentalists." (*Katha Upanishad 1.3.14*)

If one swerves even slightly from the path laid out by the spiritual master, he will fall down. If one gives any consideration to desires for profit, adoration or prestige, or if one allows himself to succumb to political intrigues, the growth of his devotional creeper will be stunted. In this matter, the devotee who is dear to Krishna is the only one who can save us. The scriptures say that the type of perfection one attains depends on the thoughts one has while engaged in spiritual practice (*.yadrasi bhavana yasya siddhir bhavati tadrsi*). If we concentrate with transcendental greed on obtaining the association of a devotee who is expert in the science of serving the Lord, then Krishna will surely appear Himself in the form of such an advanced soul.

On the other hand, if we have some other objective in mind, we may encounter many people who merely present themselves as religious leaders or as saintly persons but who have no substance. We may be confused by their powers or popularity and lose our bearings, wandering ever further from the genuine goal of pure devotion.

Far from achieving love for Krishna in Vrindavan, we will become totally confused and thus inevitably lose our soul on the path to oblivion.

It has been said that the path of religion is established by God Himself —*dharmam tu saksad bhagavat-pramtam*. If one has no understanding of this

basic principle of spiritual life, no matter how intellectually gifted he may be, his grasp of the truth will be skewed and he will become indifferent to the true, eternal, spiritual religion of the soul. Such persons promote the idea of a secular state where everyone is indifferent to the practice of religion. One should never, however, be indifferent to the true, eternal, spiritual religion. The secularist is wrong when he thinks that one who adheres to the supreme truth of spiritual life is affected by a sectarian or ungenerous spirit.

The Supreme Lord is eternal, true, permanent and everlasting; the living being also has these same qualities.

The relationship between them is thus eternal and indissoluble. The Supreme Lord is infinite consciousness. By His omnipotent desire, the atomic conscious particle (the individual living being) is brought into being. Despite this difference — the Lord being infinite and the living being atomic—the aspect of consciousness and spirituality is common to both. Thus the relation of the individual to the Supreme Lord is described as being one of simultaneous oneness and difference. Since it is impossible for one to understand how two things can be simultaneously one and distinct, the Gaudiya *mahajanas* have added the adjective *acintya* or "inconceivable" to this definition, calling their doctrine, *acintya-bhedabheda*. The implication is that one can only know this relationship through revealed scripture and accept it on faith.

In this world, people have presented many doctrines about spiritual life and religion without an understanding of this basic relation between the individual soul and God. As it is said in the *Bhagavatam*: "Thus, due to their different natures, human beings have a variety of different understandings" (*evam prakrti-vaicitryad bhidyante matayo nrnam*). Since people are under the influence of the qualities of material nature, namely goodness, passion and ignorance, they differ in their perceptions of reality and thus conflicts inevitably arise between them. Since Mahaprabhu's religion of love is universal, the secular state should promote it, for under its influence alone can all quarrels and conflicts be eliminated. Mahaprabhu's religion of love is the unique route to lasting world peace.

Only a true saint, fixed in the eternal religion of devotion to the one supreme truth, can harmonize all conflicting points of view and produce lasting peace. Krishna is the source of all incarnations, the complete whole and is all-pervading. All apparent contradictions are resolved in Him. Similarly, the

devotee who is exclusively devoted to the Lord is capable of harmonizing all different philosophical positions from his transcendental vantage point. Therefore, when one shows preference to such a devotee, one is in fact following a policy of non-preferential treatment towards any religious denomination.

In the second of the *SrimadBhagavatam's* invocatory verses, the non-envious saint has been described as a person who is uniquely qualified to engage in the true, eternal religion from which all cheating tendencies have been discarded. The word *matsarya* (envy) indicates the inability to tolerate another's good fortune or happiness. Enviousness within individuals does not allow proper distinction between the inner self and the material self. Such envy creates philosophical ideas based on distinctions between that which one possesses and that which belongs to others. Such envy is the source of war and other disruptions. Of course, varieties exist in the divine dimension, but the lack of unity arising from such varieties does not result in any real conflict because each individual is firmly fixed in the non-dual supreme truth, the source of spiritual harmony.

On the other hand, it is impossible to harmonize the materialistic propensity with the spiritual. The futile efforts to legislate harmony between these mutually opposing realities merely contribute to further unrest and disharmony. The sun, which allows us to see, cannot compromise with the darkness that obstructs vision. Similarly, the nonenvious nature cannot accommodate the envious nature of the mundane; rather, it drives it away and proclaims its conquest, just as the rising sun dispels darkness and brings auspiciousness to the world. In this way, supreme peace comes to reign in the world.

At first, the Bhagavata appears to condemn spiritual practices such as work in the spirit of renunciation or the cultivation of knowledge. It does accept, however, the necessity for work performed for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord and the cultivation of knowledge in the categories of *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana* in relation to Krishna. When placed in the context of devotion to Krishna, these contradictory visions of spiritual practice are thus harmonized. To Mahaprabhu, the *SrimadBhagavatam* is the only authoritative scripture; thus, it sets the standard for Vaishnava behavior and doctrine. True peace in the world can only be achieved on the basis of the pure philosophical conclusions established by the Bhagavatam. In this publication. The Art of Sadhana, various aspects of the Vaishnava scriptures — the *Srimad*

Bhagavatam, Hari-bhakti-vilasa and *Chaitanya Charitamrta*— are cited to highlight different aspects of the path of devotion.

Every single living being is in essence a part of the single non-dual Supreme Truth. As one takes shelter of this Supreme Truth and deepens his knowledge of that eternal relationship (*sambandha*), his understanding of the process (*abhidheya*) by which to reach the ultimate perfection of life (*prayojana*) becomes clear. As this development takes place, true vision of equality and friendship between living beings becomes a reality.

When we speak of the *Bhagavata*, we mean two different things. The first is the scripture, *Srimad Bhagavatam*. The second is the *Bhagavata* devotee who has established a relation with *Bhagavan*, the Supreme Lord. *Svarupa Damodara* instructed the *brahmin* from East Bengal to go and study the *Bhagavatam* from a *Vaishnava*.

jaha bhagavata para vaisnavera sthane ekanta asraya hara caitanya-carane caitanya bhakta-ganera nitya kara sanga tabe ta janibe siddhanta-samudra-taranga

"Go and study the *Bhagavatam* from a *Vaishnava*. Take exclusive shelter of *Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's* lotus feet. Always associate with *Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's* devotees. If you do all this, you will be able to plunge into the ocean of His divine teachings." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.5.131-132)

siddhanta bahye citte na kara alasa iha haite krsna lage sudrdha manasa

"Do not, out of laziness, neglect to meditate on the conclusions of the scriptures. From knowledge of the *siddhanta*, the mind will become fixed on *Krishna*." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.2.117)

A saintly person who is free from envy and who has studied the art of *sadhana* as taught by *Sri Chaitanya* has entered into the Lord's most confidential teachings. By hearing the *Bhagavata* from such a person, it is possible to learn its true meaning and gain the ultimate auspiciousness. By the grace of *Sri Chaitanya's* art of *sadhana*, it becomes possible to understand the transcendental nature of *Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's* body. From that knowledge, one can come to understand that the jewel in the center of the nine islands of *Nabadwip*, the divine garden of *Isodyana*¹, is similarly transcendental, as is the whole of

Mahaprabhu's abode.

The Lord says, "Both the divine sound and the divine form are My eternal bodies" (*sabdabrahma param brahma mamobhe sasvati tanu*). The sound vibration which designates the Supreme Lord is known as the divine sound or *sabda brahma*. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's gospel is just such a divine sound. By careful attention to it anyone can achieve an understanding of the form of the Param Brahman, or divinity in its highest, personal aspect. This leads to relishing His ever-fresh and delightful name, form, attributes, and pastimes—a fortune that puts to rest any residual attraction that one may have for material sense pleasures. As one starts to experience the joy of the eternal realm, one will be able to have direct perception of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's transcendental form, which will then appear like the rising full moon. May this book, *The Art of Sadhana*, based on the teachings of the Lord and the great devotees, be ever victorious.

CHAPTER 1 Perfection In Worship

The word *vedanta* means "the end result of knowledge." It is a reference to the *Upanishads*, the final books of the *Vedic* revelation or *Sruti*. These books contain the mystic insights of the *rishis* and are considered to be the basis for all spiritual knowledge in India. The Lord's incarnation, Vedavyasa, the compiler of the Vedic literature, also composed the *Vedanta sutras*, or *Brahma sutras*, in order to summarize the teachings of the *Upanishads*. The word *sutra* means "aphorism," or "code," a short, enigmatic statement meant to remind one of an entire aspect of the Upanishadic teaching.

Thus, the *Vedanta Sutras* are the texts which stand as the basis of all religious philosophy in India. Indeed, the founders of every school of Indian philosophy (Sarikara, Ramanuja, Vallabha, Vishnusvami, Madhva and Nimbarka) have all written commentaries or *bhasyas* on the sutras in order to explain their understanding of the supreme truth. The Gaudiya Vaishnava school founded by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also has an authoritative commentary on this important scripture, the *Govinda-bhasya* of Baladeva Vidyabhusana. For the Gaudiyas, however, the unblemished commentary on the *Vedanta Sutra* is the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, also composed by Vyasadeva, where the three aspects of spiritual knowledge, *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana*, are clearly enunciated.

The Vedanta Sutra is divided into four chapters or *adhyayas*, and each is further subdivided into four *padas*. The first and second chapters deal with *sambandha-tattva*, the third with *abhidheya-tattva*, and the fourth with *prayojana*.

The first chapter of the *Vedanta Sutra* is called *samanvaya*, or "synthesis," for it organizes all the ideas of the Vedas and the *Upanishads* into an orderly whole centered around the concept of Brahman, the Supreme Truth. The second chapter is called *avirodha*, which means "consistency" or "harmony." According to Baladeva Vidyabhusana, in this chapter all apparently inconsistent scriptural statements are shown to point harmoniously to the one Brahman, or Supreme Lord¹ (*tad evam aviruddhanam srutinam samanvayah sarvesvare siddhah*). The third chapter is named *sadhana*, or "the means." It discusses devotion, which is the only means for attaining Brahman. The fourth chapter is known as *phala*, or "the result." The term *prayojana*, or "ultimate purpose," is also used to indicate the attainment of Brahman.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu made the teachings of the Vedanta more explicit to His disciples and His explanations were mercifully recorded by Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta*:

veda-sastra kahe sambandha abhidheya prayojana krsna prapya sambandha bhakti praptyera sadhana abhidheya-nama bhakti prema prayojana purusartha-siromani prema maha-dhana

"The *Vedic* knowledge is subdivided into three parts known as *sambandha* ("relations"), *abhidheya* ("procedure") and *prayojana* ("the aim or end"). The knowledge of Krishna as the goal of spiritual life is called *sambandha*. The knowledge that devotion is the means of attaining Him and acting accordingly is called *abhidheya*. The ultimate goal of life, or *prayojana*, is love of Krishna or *prema*. This *prema* is the greatest treasure of spiritual life and is foremost amongst all the objectives of human life."

(Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.20.124-125)

Elsewhere, Krishnadasa repeats the same thing even more succinctly:

veda-sastre kahe sambandha abhidheya prayojana krsna krsna-bhakti prema tina maha-dhana

"The *Vedic* knowledge is subdivided into three parts known as *sambandha* ("relations"), *abhidheya* ("procedure") and *prayojana* ("the aim or end"). These three great treasures are Krishna, devotion to Krishna, and love for Krishna."

In the *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*(1.1.1) Krishna is stated to be the *dkhila-rasamrta-murti* or personification of all twelve aesthetic and relational experiences known as *rasa*. According to *sambandha* knowledge, Krishna is the Supreme Truth. The only means to attain Him is *bhakti* or devotion, and love for Him is the ultimate objective of spiritual practices.

Sambandha

In the *Bhagavad-gita*, Lord Krishna says,

vedais ca sarvair aham eva vedyo vedanta-krd veda-vid eva caham

"I am the object to be known by all the *Vedic* literatures. I am the composer of

the *Upanishads* or *Vedanta* and the knower of the true meaning of the *Veda*." (*Gita 15.15*)

In the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* the Supreme is described as the attributeless Brahman:

eko devah sarva-bhutesu gudhah sarva-vyapi sarva-bhutantaratma karmadhyaksah sarva-bhutadhivasah saksi cetah kevalo nirgimas ca

"There is but one Divine Entity, who is hidden within all beings. All-pervading, He is the dwells within every created thing; He is the overseer of all activities, the refuge of all creatures, the witness, the consciousness, the one existing thing. He has no attributes." (*Svetasvatara Upanishad 6.11*)

The *SrimadBhagavatam*, however, shows that there is an aspect of the divine beyond even this Brahman. It is *paratpara*, or "beyond that which lies beyond":

vadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvam yaj jnanam advayam brahmeti paramatmeti bhagavan iti sabyate

"Knowers of the truth have ascertained that the supreme non-dual substance is named in three ways: as Brahman, as Paramatman, and as Bhagavan."

(*Srimad Bhagavatam 1.2.11*)

The Bhagavan, or personal aspect of the Supreme, is known as Krishna—*krsnas tu bhagavan svayam* (*Srimad Bhagavatam 1.3.28*).

harir hi nirgunah saksat purusah prakrteh parah

"The Supreme Lord Hari is untouched by the material qualities. He is the supreme person, beyond the material nature." (*Srimad Bhagavatam 10.88.5*)

Abhidheya

Hari or Krishna is the *pratyag-atma*, the innermost soul of every individual, and is only understandable through bhakti, or devotion.

tvam pratyag-atmani tada bhagavaty ananta ananda-matra upapanna-samasta-

*saktau bhaktim vidhaya paramam sanakair avidya-granthim vibhetsyasi
mamaham iti prarudham*

"By engaging in intense devotion to the Supersoul, the Supreme Lord who is infinite, defined by joy alone, and in whom all potencies are present, you will slowly cut the tight knots of ignorance based in the concepts of 'I' and 'mine.'" (SrimadBhagavatam 4.11.30)

Brahman is said to be unknowable, ineffable, unmanifest and imperceptible by the material senses. Even so, it must not be said that He is completely unattainable. If we think that He can never be attained, then we will lose hope, and that is a serious impediment to ever taking up devotional service. For this reason, Baladeva quotes a line from the *Kaivalya Upanishad: sraddha-bhakti-dhyana-yogad avaiti* — "One can have direct knowledge of Him through the discipline of faith, devotion, and meditation."

Baladeva further explains, "Faith is firm belief; devotion is a reference to the numerous devotional practices beginning with hearing; and meditation means thinking of Brahman uninterruptedly—one's thought being like a stream of oil. The word 'yoga' in the text means that the discipline combines all three of these practices. The word *avaiti*, 'he knows,' means to have *saktdra*—direct perception or experience of Brahman." (*Govinda-bhasya*)

In the *Bhagavad-gita*, Krishna says that He can only be known by devotion (*bhaktya mam abhijanati*). He confirms the same to Uddhava in the *Bhagavatam: bhaktydham ekaydgrahyah* (11.14.21). The *Mathara-sruti* further glorifies *bhakti*:

*bhaktir evainam nayati bhaktir evainam darsayati bhakti-vasah purusah bhaktir
eva bhuyasi*

"Devotion attracts Him, devotion reveals Him; the Lord is influenced by devotion. Nothing is more powerful than *bhakti*."

All these texts confirm that although the Lord is inconceivable and unmanifest, devotion has the power to reveal His form.

A well-known aphorism from the *Vedanta Sutas* (3.2.24)—*api samradhanepatyaksanumanabhyam*—also broaches the same subject. The *sutra* arises in the context of the possible objection that the Supersoul or the

Param Brahman cannot be perceived by sight and the other senses. The first word of the aphorism, *api*, specifically condemns the idea. If one is properly engaged in devotional practices (*samradhane*), the Lord becomes accessible even to our senses. This is confirmed by the *Sruti* (*pratyaksa*) and the *Smrti* (*anumana*) .¹

In the *Govinda-bhasya* commentary to this sutra, Baladeva quotes two verses from the *Sruti* and two from the *Bhagavad-gita* (*Smrti*) to support the idea that certain devotees fixed in knowledge do indeed see the Lord:

*paranci khani vyatrnat svayambhus tasmad paran pasyati nantaratman kascid
dhirah pratyag-atmanam aiksad avrta-caksur amrtatvam icchan*

"The Self-born Creator pierced holes facing outward (making eyes in the body); therefore men look outward and do not see the soul within. Desiring immortality, some wise men turn their eyes inward and see the *atman*, who dwells within."
(*Katha Upanishad*2.1.1)

*na caksusa grhyate napa vaca nanyair devais tapasa karmana va jnana-
prasadena visuddha-sattvas tatas tu tam pasyati niskalam dhyayamanah*

"Though He cannot be seen by the eyes, described by words, revealed by the gods, or understood through austerities or rituals, one whose very being has been purified by [scriptural] knowledge can see Him in His entirety by meditation."
(*Mundaka Upanishad*3.1.8)

In the *Bhagavad-gita* also, Krishna further confirms the possibility of a direct vision of the Lord:

*naham vedair na tapasa na danena na cejyaya sakya evam-vidho
drastum drstavan asi mam yatha.*

*bhaktya tv ananyaya sakya aham evam-vidho 'rjuna jnatum drastum ca
tattvena pravestum ca parantapa*

"I cannot be seen in the same way that you have seen Me simply through a study of the Veda, nor through serious penances, charity, or worship. O Arjuna, it is only through undivided devotional service that I can be known in this way, that I can be seen, and indeed, entered into." (*Gita* 11.53-54)

The phrase "in the same way" (*evam-vidho*) in these verses refers to Krishna's human form. Baladeva concludes: "Therefore, by the perfect performance of devotional service (*samyag-bhaktya*) the Lord can indeed be perceived. At this time, the eyes and the other senses are saturated with devotion and this gives them the ability to know him."²

Once a person (the "wise individual" or *dhira* in the *Katha Upanishad* verse quoted above) stops seeking the satisfaction of his own senses, he attains love of Krishna, in which he seeks only the pleasure of Krishna's senses.

In the context of Baladeva's comments on the *Vedanta Sutra*, such a person obtains divine sight when his eyes are smeared with the unguent of love. This gives him the qualification to behold Syamasundara's divine form of unparalleled beauty.

The Different Forms Of Yoga

In some places, the scriptures glorify ritual activity or disinterested works as being the best means for spiritual accomplishment, or *abhidheya*; in others, they glorify knowledge. These are also known as yogas, or spiritual disciplines. Yoga also means "uniting with the supreme." The abovementioned yogas are thus known as karma-yoga and *jnana-yoga*. It is a fact however, that the topmost process for achieving spiritual perfection is devotion, or *Bhakti* yoga. *Bhakti* is completely independent of any other kind of process, whereas karma, *jnana* and yoga all rely on *bhakti* to give their full rewards. This is stated in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta* (2.22.17):

krsna-bhakti hay a abhidheya pradhana bhakti-mukha-niriksaka karma-yoga-jnana

"The primary rewards of karma, *jnana*, and mystic yoga, namely sense enjoyment, liberation and mystic powers, are all considered by the devotees to be most insignificant. These processes have no independent power to bestow rewards on the practitioner. Even liberation itself stands with hands folded, waiting for the opportunity to serve *bhakti*. The other goals of life—religiosity, wealth, and sense enjoyments—are even more dependent on *bhakti* and stand quietly waiting for her glance of mercy."

Although the entire *Bhagavad-gita* deals with the subject of yoga, the sixth

chapter in particular discusses the meditational form of *yogic* discipline (the eightfold *yogic* system) that is usually equated with the term *yoga*. At the end of that chapter, two verses clearly state that of all the *yogas*, *Bhakti yoga*, or the discipline of devotion, is the best.³

In his explanation of these verses, our predecessor *acarya* Bhaktivinoda Thakura has explained the meaning of the term *yoga* and discussed the differences between the different types of *yogic* practice: "A fruitive worker (*sakama-karmi*) cannot be called a *yogi*, for this term is only applicable to the disinterested worker, the philosopher, the follower of the eightfold mystic path, and the practitioner of devotional service. The word *yoga* itself refers to the gradual path of spiritual development. Any person who takes to *yoga* is on the road to a direct experience of the Supreme Spirit.

"The *yoga* of desireless action is the first step along this path, and when knowledge and renunciation are added to such action, the aspirant advances to the stage of *jnana-yoga*. When direct meditation on the Supreme Lord is added to the other qualities, then one advances to the stage of practicing the eightfold *yogic* system, or *astanga yoga*. The fourth and highest stage is when the feeling of love for the Supreme Person is added to these disciplines.

"The seeker of the ultimate good will veritably engage in the spiritual discipline of *yoga*. As one takes to the practices of each successive stage of development, a necessity to develop strong determination and faith in its practices will ensue. However, as he advances, he will ultimately have to discard his strict adherence to the detailed practices of that particular stage. If one remains attached to one or the other of these stages without going on further, he is identified with the partial *yogic* practice to which he has been limited. As a result, some persons are known as *karma-yogis*, some are *jnana-yogis*, while others are *astanga-yogis* or *bhakti-yogis*.

"Krishna says, Therefore, O Arjuna, anyone who makes it his exclusive goal to engage in devotion to Me alone is superior to the three other kinds of *yogi*. You should therefore become a *yogi*, that is, a *bhakti-yogi*. Through the *yoga* of desireless action one advances in knowledge; through the *yoga* of knowledge, one advances to the *yoga* of meditation on the Supreme Lord and from there, one finally progresses to the *yoga* of devotion, characterized by love for the Supreme Person.' "

In his commentary to these verses, Visvanatha Cakravarti writes: *karmi jnam cayogi matah/astanga-yogi yogitarah/sravana-kirtanadi-bhaktimams tu yogitama ity arthah*: "The karmi and jndni are considered yogis. The astanga-yogi, the follower of the eightfold yoga system of Patanjali, is considered to be a greater spiritualist than the aforementioned two. But the best of all yogis is one who practices devotional acts like hearing and chanting."

Thus a devotee takes no interest in other practices of yoga, which are partial. The devotee considers them not only incomplete, but even defective because of the presence of ego desire implicit in their practice. The Lord made the following statement to Uddhava:

tasmad mad-bhakti-yuktasya yogino vai mad-atmanah najnanam na ca vairagyam prayah sreya bhaved iha

yat karmabhir yat tapasa jnana-vairagyatas ca yat yogena dana-dharmena sreyaobhir itarair api

sarvam mad-bhakti-yogena mad-bhakto labhate'njasa svargapavarge mad-dhama

na kimcid sadhavo dhira bhakta hy ekantino mama vanchanty api may a dattam kaivalyam apunarbhavam

"For the devoted yogi who has surrendered his thoughts to Me, neither knowledge nor renunciation are considered to be the sources of true good in this world. All the results obtained through ritual practices, penance, philosophy, renunciation, *yogic* discipline, charity or performance of prescribed duties, are easily obtained by My devotees through the practice of devotional service to Me. My saintly, patient and single-minded devotees desire nothing of all this; nevertheless, I still bestow all these rewards on them, even including liberation and freedom from rebirth." (*Srimad Bhagavatam 11.20.31-34*)

Therefore, other than devotional service, mystical practices are like the teats on the neck of a goat — they serve no worthwhile function. For this reason, an intelligent person gives up the useless tendency to seek out sense enjoyment and liberation and cultivates pure devotion through the practice of *Bhakti yoga*.

The Perfect Process Of Worship

The word *samradhana* found in the *Vedanta Sutra* aphorism quoted earlier is also significant. It comes from the verb root *radh*, which means "to worship." The prefix *sam* means "complete or perfect." Also derived from the same root is the name of Krishna's internal potency, Sri Radha. Radharani is the perfect worshiper of Krishna, as indicated by the Bhagavatam verse spoken by the *gopis* in the description of the *rasa-lila*:

anayaradhito nunam bhagavan harir isvarah yan no vihdyah govindah prito yam anayad rahah

"Truly the Supreme Lord, the supreme controller, has been perfectly worshiped by Her (Radha). It is for this reason that Govinda was so pleased with Her that He took Her to a secluded spot, leaving all of us behind." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 10.30.28)

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings can be summarized as follows:

aradhyo bhagavan vrajesa-tanayas tad-dhadma vrndavanam ramyd kacid upasana vraja-vadhu-vargena va kalpita srimad-bhagavatam pramanam amalam preman pumartho mahan sri-caitanya-mahaprabhor matam idam tatradaarah nah parah

"The object of worship (*aradhya*) is the Lord in His form as the son of the King of Vraja. His abode is Vrindavan and the cowherd girls who live there with Him, chief amongst whom is Radhika, are His perfect worshipers, or *samradhikas*. The most enchanting method of worshiping the Supreme Lord is that devised by these *gopis*. The most authoritative source of divine revelation is the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Love for Krishna or *prema* is the fifth and ultimate goal of human life. These are the basic principles of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's belief and we thus consider this doctrine to be supreme."

The conclusion is that worshiping Krishna by following Srimati Radharani is the spiritual process justifiably named *samradhana*, "the most perfect process of worship." Any activity of worship in which the element of *prema* is absent will not result in a direct vision of the Supreme Person

The following couplets are found in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta*:

jnana-karma-yoga-dharme nahe krsna vasa krsna-vasa-hetu eka prema-bhakti-rasa

"By following the paths of speculative philosophical knowledge, fruitive activity or mystic yoga to control the senses, one cannot win Krishna over. The only way of winning His love is through the taste of devotion in ecstatic love." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 1.17.75*)

aiche sastra kahe karma jnana yoga tyaji bhaktye krsna vasa haya bhaktye tanre bhaji

"Such scriptures say that one should give up fruitive activity, speculative knowledge and the mystic yoga system. By devotion, Krishna is won over. Therefore, I worship him with devotion." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.20.136*)

Without pure devotion, the awakening of ecstatic love is an impossibility. Pure devotion or *uttama bhakti* as described by Rupa Gosvami is the culture of Krishna consciousness characterized by the absence of desire for anything but Krishna. Rupa Gosvami further notes that such culture must not be enfeebled by the admixture of practices appropriate to the paths of philosophical speculation and fruitive action. After repeating this same description in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta*, Krishnadasa Kaviraja goes on to say:

ei suddha-bhakti iha haite prema haya pancaratre bhagavate ei laksana haya

"This is the definition of pure .devotional service from which ecstatic love is developed. The characteristics of such love are described in literatures like the *Bhagavata* and *Pancaratra*. "4 (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.19.169*)

The *Pancaratra* specifically defines devotional service as the engagement of the senses in the service of the Proprietor of the Senses. It adds that this service is to be free from any contamination by identity with the body and unblemished through being exclusively fixed on the Lord (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.12; Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.19.170*):

sarvopadhi-vinirmuktam tat-paratvena nirmalam hrsikena hrsikesa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate

And in the *Bhagavatam*, the following extended description of pure *bhakti* is given by Kapiladeva to his mother Devahuti:

mad-guna-sruti-matrena mayi sarva-guhasaye mano-gatir avicchinna yatha gangambhaso 'mbudhau

laksanam bhakti-yogasya nirgunasya hy udahrtam ahaituky avyavahita ya bhaktih purusottame

"The primary sign that pure union in devotion, free from any material quality, has appeared in someone's heart comes when, upon hearing about My qualities, that person's thoughts are drawn immediately and irresistibly towards Me, the indweller of every being, in the same way that the waters of the Ganges flow toward the sea. Like the flow of the Ganges, such devotion to the Supreme Person is unmotivated and unimpeded." (*Srimaa salokya-sarsti-samipyasarpuyaikatvam apy uta diyamanam na grhnanti vind mat-sevanam jandh*

sa eva bhakti-yogakhya atyantika udahrtah yenativrajya tri-gunam madbhavayopapadyate

"Unless he is assured of having service to the Lord, a pure devotee does not accept any kind of liberation, whether it be residence on the same planet, equal opulences to the Lord, proximity to Him, having the same form as the Lord, or monistic union — even though they may be offered to the devotee by the Lord. "Thus I have described the superlative stage of that which is known as Bhakti yoga. By mastering this discipline, one can overcome the three qualities of material-nature and attain true feeling (*bhava*) for Me." (*Bhagavatam 3.29.12-13*)

The above quotations show that the *Bhagavata* and the *Pancaratrika* schools of thought ultimately reach the same conclusion.

Anyone who engages in the practice of devotional service is gradually freed of the bad habits (*anarthas*) that hold him back from making spiritual progress. As the *anarthas* recede, he becomes firmly fixed in his devotional practices and this firmness allows him to execute his practices with purity and deep attachment. The devotee then goes on developing a real taste (*ruci*) which, when strengthened, develops into the divine emotion and preliminary ecstasies of the *bhava* stage. From there it is not long before he attains the stage of ecstatic love known as *prema*. A devotee's progress does not stop at this stage of perfection, however. There are numerous stages which develop within ecstatic love, namely *sneha*, *mana*, *pranaya*, *raga*, *anuraga*, *bhava*, and *mahabhava*.

Prayojana

The fourth chapter of the *Vedanta Sutra* is called "the results." The first section

or *adhikarana* of this chapter is called *avrty-adhikarana*, or "repetition." The *sutra* after which this section is named is *avrtytir asakrdupadesat*: "One must engage in the repeated practice of hearing and chanting, or the uninterrupted meditation on the Supreme, for this instruction has been given again and again." (*Vedanta Sutra 4.1.1*)

Baladeva Vidyabhusana understands this instruction to be contained in the words repeated nine times to Svetaketu in the *Chandogya Upanishad*: *sa ya eso'nimaitad-atmyam idam sarvam tat satyam sa atma tat tvam asi svetaketo*: "That which is the smallest of the small is that of which all that exists is made, O Svetaketu. It is the truth and it is the Self. You are that, O Svetaketu." The Self here means the Supreme Brahman. The words *tat tvam asi* can also be understood as "you are His."

Thus it is quite logical that the emphasis on sound is found again at the end of the *Vedanta Sutra* in its final aphorism: *anavrtyti sabdad anavrtyti sabdat* — "Revelation tells us that we never come back. Revelation tells us that we never come back." (*Vedanta Sutra 4.4.22*)

The purport is that when one knows the Lord's true identity, one attains His abode of Goloka by the influence of His devotional service. Once he is so liberated, he never again returns to this world of repeated birth and death. The proof of this is found in "sound," or revelation (*sabda*).

The relevant passages Baladeva cites from the revealed scriptures are:

etena pratipadyamana imam manavam avartam navartante

"Those who have taken shelter of Brahman and are thus liberated never return to this mortal world of repeated birth and death."

sa khalv evam vartayan yavad ayusam brahma-lokam abhisampadyate na ca punar avartate na ca punar avartate

"The liberated person remains as such throughout his life and then after death goes to the Brahmaloaka, whence he never returns, whence he never returns." (*Chandogya Upanishad 8.15.1*)

Krishna confirms this statement in the Gita with two important verses:

*mam upetya punarjanma dukkhalayam asasvatam napnuvanti
mahatmanah samsiddhim paramam gatah*

*abrahma-bhuvanal lokah punar avartino 'rjuna mam upetya tu kaunteya punar
janma na vidyate*

"The great devotees who attain the status of participating in My divine pastimes, once having reached Me, never again accept a transitory birth, which is the dwelling house of agony. O Arjuna, from the planet of Lord Brahma downwards, the residents of all planets are naturally subjected to repeated birth and death. But, upon reaching Me, O Kaunteya, there is no rebirth." (*Gita 8.15-16*)

The repetition of the phrase *anavrttih sabdat* is an indication that the *Vedanta Sutra* ends with these words.⁵

Of course, for the devotees, *prema*, which is *bhakti* in its purest form, is its own reward. Devotees are therefore ready to take birth in any lowly species as long as they can be assured of some service to the Lord, which is the highest good as far as they are concerned. This attitude is exemplified by Lord Brahma in his prayers to Gopala Krishna:

*tad astu me natha sa bhiin-bhago bhavet'ra vanyatra tu va tirascam yenaham
eko'pi bhavaj-jananam bhutva niseve tava pada-pallavam*

"O my lord, allow me to have that great good fortune, either in this life or in another, even if it be in the body of a lowly creature, whereby I can live amongst your intimate devotees and serve Your lotus feet." (*Srimad Bhagavatam 10.14.30*)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura repeats the same sentiment in one of the songs in his *Gitavali*.

*janmaobi moe iccha jadi tora bhakta-grhe jani janma ha-u mora kita janma hau
jatha tuwa dasa bahinnukha brahma nahi asa*

"O Lord, if it is your wish that I should take birth again, grant me birth in the house of a devotee. I will even gladly become a worm or an insect as long as I can be Your servant, but I have no interest in becoming a Brahma who has no interest in Your service." (*Saranagati 11*)

In this way, *bhakti* is both the *abhidheya* and the *prayojana*, both the means to perfection and perfection itself. It is said there are three levels of *bhakti*: devotion in practice (*sadhana-bhakti*), devotion on the level of ecstasy (*bhava-bhakti*), and devotion on the level of pure love (*prema-bhakti*). *Bhava-bhakti* is attained when the devotional service in practice has become mature and when intensified it becomes *prema-bhakti*.

Devotional service in practice is defined by Rupa Gosvami in the *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* as follows:

*krti-sadhya bhavet sadhya-bhava sa sadhanabhidha nitya-siddhasya
bhavasya prakatyarh hrdisadhyata*

"That devotion which is executed by the senses and which aims at the attainment of *bhava* is called *sadhana-bhakti*. The *bhava* which it seeks is eternally perfect and simply becomes manifest in the heart of the practitioner." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.2.2)

Here, Rupa Gosvami warns against a misunderstanding of the term *sadhana*. Through the execution of the regulative principles of devotion one does not create or produce *bhava-bhakti*, or devotional feeling. Devotional feeling or *bhava* is a manifestation of Krishna's internal potency and thus eternally perfect or *nitya-siddha*.

Devotion is the eternal natural mood of the living being, and through the practice of devotional service, it is revealed in the heart of the devotee. This is how one should understand the object of the practice. Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami explains this verse as follows:

*sravanadi-kriya tara svarupa-laksana tatastha-laksane upajdya prema-
dhana nitya-siddha krsna-prema sadhya kabhu naya sravanadi-suddha-citte
karaye udaya*

"The activities of hearing, chanting, remembering and so forth make up the essential characteristic (*svarupa-laksana*) of devotional service. Its marginal characteristic (*tatastha-laksana*) is that it awakens pure love for Krishna. It is never possible to create pure love for Krishna; rather, it appears in the heart which has been purified by devotional practices like hearing and chanting." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.103-4)

In his *Amṛta-pravaha-bhāṣya*, Bhaktivinoda Thakura elaborates on these verses as follows:

"The essential characteristic of devotional service consists of activities like hearing and chanting about Krishna with the appropriate attitude. This characteristic results in the treasure of *prema* manifesting when the practitioner gives up all other desires and cuts off all relation to fruitive activities and the search for liberation. Love for Krishna is *nitya-siddha* (eternally self-manifest). It cannot be attained by any means other than pure devotional service. It wells up in the mind which has been purified by the process of devotional service in practice. Therefore, activities such as pure chanting and hearing are the essential elements of devotional service in practice."

Vaidhi Bhakti

Devotional service in practice is of two types: *vaidhi bhakti* ("devotion based on regulative principles") and *raganuga bhakti* ("devotion which follows in the wake of spontaneous love"). These have also been explained in the *Chaitanya Charitamṛta* :

raga-hina jana bhaje sastrera ajnaya

"One who has no spontaneous attachment for the Lord worships Him because it is ordained in the scriptures. All scriptures call such devotional service *vaidhi bhakti*. " (*Chaitanya Charitamṛta* 2.22.106)

The word *raga* means a natural desire for the Supreme Soul, a natural attachment or affection. If such a natural affection has not arisen in one's heart, but he has developed faith in the scriptural injunctions after hearing from the saintly persons, he may perform devotional service beginning with accepting a guru. Such devotional service is called *vaidhi bhakti*. There are sixty-four different activities and prohibitions which make up this type of regulated devotion. The three main regulations are taking shelter of a spiritual master, being initiated by him and serving him. Among the other sixty-one activities, five are considered to be the most important: associating with devotees, singing the Holy Names, hearing the *Bhagavatam*, residing in Mathura (i.e., the holy *dhama*), and worshipping the deity with faith. Only a small amount of effort in these activities will result in the practitioner developing love for Krishna. The great authorities or *mahajanas* say that whether you practice

only one of these five activities or all of them, unless you practice with constancy or *nistha*, you will not be washed by the waves of *prema*. *Nistha* has been defined by Jiva Gosvami as *aviksepena satatyam*, or steadfastness without distraction. The idea is that one should be fixed in a particular practice with unshakable faith.

eka anga sadhe keha sadhe bahu anga nistha haile upajaya premera taranga

"Whether a person executes only one or many of the processes of devotional service, the waves of love of Godhead will arise if he or she practices with fixed determination or *nistha*." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.130)

Elsewhere, Mahaprabhu says that the nine types of devotion named by Prahlada are the best amongst the sixty-four devotional practices. Of these nine, the first three (hearing, chanting and remembering) are considered superior. Of these three, *kirtana* is the best.

Kirtana itself is subdivided into several categories: glorification of Krishna's names, His form. His attributes and His activities. Of these, pride of place is given to the chanting of His names. Anyone who takes up the chanting of the Holy Names with constancy is sure to obtain the mercy of the Name and he will quickly relish the taste of love of God.

Raganuga Bhakti

The great authorities or *mahajanas* say that the practice of devotion purely on the strength of the scriptural injunctions leads to the Lord's majestic feature in the abode of Vaikuntha, not to that aspect of the Lord which resides in Vraja. To attain Vraja, one must take up the practice of *raganuga bhakti*. This is stated in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta* (1.3.15):

sakala jagate more kare vidhi-bhakti vidhi-bhaktye vraja-bhd-va paite nahi sakti

"Everyone throughout the world worships Me according to scriptural injunctions; but by this process of *vaidhi bhakti* one cannot attain the loving moods of Vraja."

The preceding verses certainly tell us that only worship on the *raga* path can result in obtaining the service of Krishna in Vraja. However, what we must try to understand here is the following: if one thinks on that basis that the various

regulative principles of the vidhi-marga can be dispensed with before acquiring a readiness for the manifestation of rdgdugd bhakti, such a person will become a religious hypocrite, a pretender and a *prakṛta-sahajīya*. For this reason, Bhaktivinoda Thakura has written in his song *Kṛṣṇa-nama dhare kata bal?*:

vidhi-marga-rata jane svadhīnata ratna dane

raga-marge karan pravesā raga-vasavartī haiya parakīya bhavasraye labhe jiva fersna-premavesā

"To the person fixed in the regulative principles, the Holy Name gives the jewel of independence, placing him on the path of spontaneous devotion. That person, overcome by spontaneous attachment to the Lord, takes shelter of the *pardkīya* mood and goes on to become absorbed in love for Krishna."

One who aims for the ultimate goal of pure love for Krishna should start by taking shelter of a spiritual master according to the scriptural injunctions and following the *vidhi-marga* by continuously chanting the Holy Names of the Lord. He will thus very quickly obtain the qualifications necessary for the manifestation of spontaneous affection. As the undesirable elements of one's character (*anarthas*) are destroyed, spontaneous affection automatically awakens. On the other hand, if one does not rid himself of these undesirable elements, the discussion of subjects for which he is not qualified will in all likelihood have disastrous consequences.

It is premature to think that as soon as one has taken shelter of his spiritual master he has the right to relish books like the *Bhagavata's Rasa-pancadhyaya*, *Gopīgītā*, *Uddhavasamvāda*, or *Govinda-līlāmṛta* and *Kṛṣṇa-bhavanāmṛta*, the songs of Candīdasa and Vidyapati, *Jagannātha-vallabha-nāṭaka*, *Kṛṣṇa-kāmāmṛta*, *Gīta-govinda*, and other books of this type. The inevitable consequence of such precocious entry into the subjects of Krishna's conjugal pastimes is that one falls into illicit sexual activity.

Faith Is The Seed Of The Devotional Creeper

Faith is the seed of the devotional creeper. The seed of the creeper of *vaidhi bhakti* is faith in the regulative principles given in the scripture; the seed of the creeper of raganuga bhakti is faith based on intense desire for the spontaneous love of the residents of Vraja. One who has faith is eligible for the practice of devotion (*sraddhavan jana haya bhakti-adhikari* — *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.64). If one does not have this faith based in intense desire (*lobha-mula sraddha*), then various pitfalls are inevitable in the practice of raganuga *bhakti*. On the other hand, if he has acquired such faith, he will be able to constantly listen to the nectarean pastimes of Vrajendranandana, such as the *rasa-lila*, and the supreme devotion which arises of such attachment will cleanse his heart of the disease of material desire. With the dissolution of mundane desire, an intense urge arises to serve the senses of Madana-mohana, the transcendental Cupid who enchants the mundane Cupid with His beauty. It is only at this point in one's spiritual development that one will be able to properly engage in the practices of raganuga *bhakti* such as hearing, chanting and meditating on the *asta-kallya lilas*. As long as material desires are present in the heart, it is very possible that a concerted effort to enter into erotic subject matter such as those described in Jayadeva's *Gita-govinda* will have inauspicious results.

One must thus be careful to follow the direction of the guru closely; there are many dangers in trying to follow the vraja-bhava on one's own. One should follow the process as given by a bonafide guru, carefully engaging in the devotional activities as prescribed by him. As the disciple does so, he will gradually clear his heart of all unwanted elements and then with good fortune, progress through the stages described by Rupa Gosvami— *nistha*, *ruci*, *asakti*, then *bhava* and *prema*. One should pay careful attention not to fall into the dangerous trap of thinking himself to be an advanced devotee. Since Mahaprabhu has assured us that nama-bhajana is the best of all devotional practices and the source of all perfection, we should lay to rest any doubts that nama-bhajana is inappropriate for any stage of devotional life, whether one is a beginner, a practitioner or a perfected soul.⁶

sada nama laibe yatha-labhete santosa ei ta acara kare bhakti-dharma-posa

"One should always chant the Holy Name and be satisfied with whatever comes to him as his lot. Such behavior is propitious for the development of devotion."

(Chaitanya Charitamrta 1.17.30)

Since chanting the Holy Name is the only practice, and since the Holy Name alone is the only object of practice, one should endeavor with great determination to take shelter of the Holy Name in all times and circumstances. If we are able to do this, the Holy Name will bestow His mercy on us and destroy all the *anarthas* in our hearts and cause all auspiciousness to manifest there. When a purified feeling of love for Krishna's name arises, then the same kind of purified love for the Named also arises. At this point the purified feelings of raga become possible.

*isat vikasi punah dekhaya nija-rupa-guna citta hari laya krsna pasa purna
vikasita hana vraje more jaya lana dekhaya nija svarupa vilasa*

"When the Name is even slightly revealed, it shows me my own spiritual form and characteristics. It steals my mind and takes it to Krishna's side. When the Name is fully revealed, it takes me directly to Vraja, where it shows me my personal role in the eternal pastimes." *(Saranagati)*

The conclusion, then, is that the worship of the Holy Name is the best means of developing one's devotional attitude and is thus the means through which one's Vraja mood is revealed. To take up the chanting of the Holy Name is thus to embark on the way to the perfection of worship.

CHAPTER 2 The Purifying Power Of Service

In the Bhagavad-gita, the Lord states,

daivi hy esa gunamayi mama maya duratyaya mam eva ye prapadyante mayam etam taranti te

"The external energy consisting of the three qualities is divinely empowered and thus impossible to overcome. Whoever surrenders to Me, however, can cross over this *maya*." (*Bhagavad-Gita 7.14*)

Visvanatha Cakravarti notes that this verse prompts the question, "In view of the great benefits which come from surrendering to the Lord, why then aren't there more intelligent people who do so?" The succinct answer given by Visvanatha is that those people may think themselves to be intelligent, but in fact they are not. The truly intelligent, the truly learned, will indeed surrender to the Lord. Those who lack such piety go on to be *kupanditas* rather than *supanditas*—people whose learning has been used for personal gain and self-aggrandizement rather than for the satisfaction of the Lord. To clarify this, Krishna goes on to say:

na mama duskrino mudhah prapadyante naradhamah mayayapahrta-jnana asuram bhavam asritah

"The wicked do not surrender to Me. They are foolish and the lowest of mankind; their intelligence has been robbed of them by illusion and they have taken refuge in a demoniac mentality." (*Gita 7.15*)

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura comments on this verse that there are four kinds of wicked people (*duskrin*) who do not surrender to the Lord: (1) the foolish (*mudhah*'), (2) the lowest of humankind (*naradhamah*), (3) those whose knowledge has been robbed by illusion (*mayayapahrta-jnanah*) and (4) those who are of a demonic mentality (*asuram bhavam asritah*). He goes on to analyze the characteristics of each of these types:

(1) The foolish. *Eke mudhah pasu-tulyah kanninah*. These are the fruitive workers who are on a par with the animals. They have no regard for the eternal delights of Krishna conscious philosophy but seek rather the fleeting pleasures

of sense gratification in this world and later in heaven.

(2) The lowest of humankind (*naradhamah*). These people have accepted the principles of devotion for a short time at some point in their lives and thus can be considered to have achieved the status of human beings. However, before achieving the goal of devotional practice they give it up, thinking it not worth the effort. Such a voluntary rejection of *bhakti* is the symptom of their being the lowest of humankind.

(3) The next class are those who, despite having studied and even taught the scriptures, have lost their powers of discrimination due to the influence of the Lord's external energy. These people think that the divine form of Narayana in Vaikuntha alone is worthy of our eternal praise and devotion, but they take Rama and Krishna not to be similarly worthy, thinking them to be ordinary human beings. It is for such persons that the Lord spoke the verse, *avajananti mam mudhah manusim tanum asritam* (9.11): "Fools have no respect for Me when I take a human form." Though these people may give the appearance of being surrendered devotees, this is not the case.

(4) The demons are those who have become the enemies of the Lord. They are like Jarasandha who saw the form of the Lord but shot arrows at it. Such persons argue falsely that because Krishna's form can be seen, it is therefore the same as other forms visible in the material world.

They project this belief even onto Narayana in Vaikuntha and try to cut up His body of eternity, consciousness and bliss. As a result, they never surrender to Him.

Those Who Come To Devotional Service

In the Gita's next verse, Lord Krishna goes on to describe four sorts of people who do surrender to Him:

catur-vidha bhajante mam janah sufertino' rjuna arto jijnasur artharathi jnani ca bharatarsabha

"Four kinds of pious persons worship Me, O Arjuna. These are the afflicted, those who seek wisdom, those who seek gain, and the wise." (*Gita 7.16*)

The afflicted (*arta*) are those suffering from disease or some other hardship who

seek freedom from these sufferings. The one who seeks wisdom (*jijnasu*) may be either someone looking for knowledge of the self, or a student with interests in some other field of learning like grammar. Those seeking gain (*artharathi*) wish to enjoy sense objects like land, beautiful women and money. The wise (*jnani*) are those who are internally purified and renounced. Visvanatha states that the pious (*suhrtinah*) are those who are religiously engaged in following the prescribed duties of the *varnasrama-dharma*.

The first three of these pious types are householders who still have mundane desires whereas the last is a desireless renunciate, a *sannyasi*. All four, however, are performers of mixed devotion: the first three engage in devotion mixed with karma (*karma-misra bhakti*), while the last engages in devotion mixed with knowledge (*jnana-misra bhakti*), or the *yoga-misra bhakti* which is described in the *Gita's* eighth chapter (see also 8.12). When devotion is not mixed with any of these other elements, it is called *kevala*, or exclusive devotion; this is known as pure *bhakti* and is described in a number of verses in the *Gita*:

*mayy asakta-manah partha yogam yunjan mad-asrayah asamsayam samagram
mam yatha jnasyasi tac chrnu*

"Now hear, O son of Prtha, how by engaging in yoga while taking shelter of Me and with your mind attached to Me, you can know Me fully, free from doubt."

*(Gita 7.1) ananya-cetah satatam yo mam smarati nityasah tasyaham sulabhah
partha*

"For the yogi who is always disciplined and unceasingly remembers Me without deviation, I am easy to obtain, O son of Prtha." (*Gita 8.14*)

*mahamanas tu mam partha daivim prakrtim asritah bhajanty ananya-
manaso jnatva bhutadim avyayam*

*satatam kirtayanto mam yatantas ca drdha-vratah namasyantas ca mam
bhaktya nitya-yukta upasate*

"O son of Prtha, the great souls who take shelter of the divine nature worship Me with undivided attention because they know My unlimited opulences. They are constantly chanting My glories, endeavoring fully while keeping firm in their vows, bowing down to Me with devotion and worshipping Me, permanently united with Me." (*Gita 9.13-14*)

ananyas cintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate tesam nityabhiyuktanam yoga-ksemam vahamy aham

"I personally assume responsibility for protecting and acquiring all the necessities of life for My fully dependent devotees who are always absorbed in thought of Me alone and who worship Me exclusively in all respects." (*Gita* 9.22)

In His very last instruction in the *Bhagavad-gita* (*sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja*), Lord Krishna states that one should abandon all duties previously prescribed in the Vedic scriptures, including the *varnasramadharma*, or other regulations governing the bodily activities or thought. Further, one should concentrate on the most confidential teaching of the scripture—the personal nature of the Supreme Lord—and surrender exclusively to Him. Thus the kind of piety (*sukrti*) needed to attain this pure or exclusive devotion is that which is directed to worshipping the Supreme Lord (*bhakty-unmukhi*).

The Transition From Impiety To Surrender

Srila Saccidananda Bhaktivinoda Thakura gives an expanded discussion of these verses in his translation of the *Bhagavad-gita*, explaining how one goes from reluctance to engaging in the Lord's service to enthusiasm. He paraphrases the *Bhagavad-gita* verses as follows: "The Lord says, 'It is almost impossible for those who are impious to engage in My devotional service because they are not on the path of progressive development. Even so, there are occasionally some unregulated or impious individuals who are exceptions to this rule and take suddenly to the path of devotion.'

"Among the pious who follow a regulated lifestyle, there are four types who engage in My service. Anyone who seeks the fulfillment of material desires suffers when his or her hopes are frustrated. In the midst of such suffering, such people remember Me. I call these people *arta*, 'the distressed.' Impious people who do not follow a regulated lifestyle, however, never think of Me even when distressed."

"The previously mentioned foolish persons (*mudhas*), the godless empiricists and logicians, come around to remembering Me when they begin to feel a need for the concept of a supreme being in their researches. These are the *jijnasus*.

"Those whom I have described as 'the lowest of mankind' (*naradhama*) accept

the principle of deity as a necessity for ethics, but not that ethics are founded in the principle of the deity. When these people become dissatisfied with their inadequate concept of God and realize that the deity stands above ethics, they become devotees on the path of *vaidhi bhakti*, seeking some return for their devotional practice as *artharthis*.

"Those whom I have called *mayayapahrta-jnanah* worship Shiva or Brahma but do not have accurate knowledge of *sambandha*—they do not recognize that the Supreme Lord eternally possesses potencies, that the *jiva* is an eternally individual spark of consciousness, and that the *jiva's* relation to the unconscious material energy is temporary. Most of all they don't recognize that their relationship of service to the Supreme Lord is their eternal constitutional position. As a result, even though they study the *Vedanta* and other philosophical works, their knowledge is covered. When a *jiva* whose intelligence has been stolen by the illusory energy recognizes that the Brahman and Paramatman conceptions of the Supreme Truth are incomplete and takes shelter of the personal conception of the deity, Bhagavan, the Lord Himself removes the covering over his intelligence.

The *jiva* then recognizes that he is the eternal servant of the Lord and takes up the six fold path of surrender (*prapattij*).¹

"Thus, when the distressed person's covering of desire is removed, when the seeker of knowledge (*jijnasu*) gives up the covering which restricts him to ethically-based knowledge, the seeker of profit (*artharthis*) gives up the trivial desire for sensual happiness in the hereafter, and the philosophers (*jnani*) give up their attachment to merging into the impersonal aspect of the truth and their belief that the personal aspect is a temporary manifestation, then these four kinds of persons can also become eligible for devotional service. As long as these impurities remain, they will at best engage in mixed devotional service. Only when the impurities are removed can someone engage in *kevala*, *akincana*, or *uttama bhakti*."

The word used by Bhaktivinoda Thakura for impurity is *kasaya*. All impurities have at their base the desire for the satisfaction of one's own senses. When the distressed, the curious, the materially motivated and the learned give up their sensually based desires and begin thinking of how they can please the Lord, their devotion becomes free of impurities—this is pure devotional service.

The Lord Holds The Pure Devotee Most Dear

Lord Krishna continues His discussion in the *Gita's* seventh chapter by specifying that, of the four types of people who take up devotional service, the *jnani* is supreme:

tesam jnani nitya-yukta eka-bhaktir visisyate priyo hi jnanino 'tyartham aham sa ca mama priyah

"Of these permanently most dear to four types of worshipers, the philosopher situated in knowledge of Me who is engaged in single-minded devotion stands out. I, in My form as Syamasundara, am such a philosopher and he is most dear to Me." (*Gita 7.17*)

udarah sarva evaite jnani tv atmaiva me matam asthitah sa hi yuktatma mam evanuttamam gatim

"All these devotees are undoubtedly magnanimous souls, but the philosopher is My very soul. Being ever in union with Me, he is convinced that I am the unexcelled goal of life." (*Gita 7.18*)

We cannot say that the Lord has no affection whatsoever for the distressed person, the seeker of wealth and the curious person who have taken up His devotional service. The Lord is like a desire tree and to some extent He awards all of His worshipers the objects of their desires. And of course, these devotees gladly accept them. The truly knowledgeable philosopher, however, does not ask anything of the Lord, whether it be life in heaven or salvation from all material involvement. This is why he is so dear to the Lord. He has realized that more than the formless aspect of Brahman, the Lord's form as the beautiful blackish boy is the unexcelled goal of life. The Lord holds this desireless philosopher to be so dear that He considers him to be equal to Himself.

The Lord considers the exclusive, pure devotee to be even dearer than Himself. He therefore says to Uddhava:

na tatha me priyatama atma-yonir na sankarah na ca sankarsano na srir naivatma ca yatha bhavan

"No one is as dear to Me as you, O Uddhava, not My son Brahma, not Shiva who was born out of My very body, not My brother Sankarsana, not Laksmi, My

consort who dwells on My chest, not even My own body." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.14.15)

Elsewhere in the *Bhagavatam*, the Lord says,

*naham atmanam asase mad-bhaktaih sadhubhir vina sriyam catyantikim
brahman yesam gatih aham para*

"O *brahmin*, I have no desire to enjoy My transcendental bliss and My supreme opulences without the saintly devotees for whom I am the only goal in life." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 9.4.64)

The Association Of Devotees Is The Purifying Force

In Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti's opinion, the three types of devotees—the *arta*, *jijnasu* and *artharathi*—all have desires, whereas the *jnani* is desireless. Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami however, differs somewhat. He writes that the *arta* and *artharathi* have material desires, while the *jijnasu* and *jnani* are desirous of attaining liberation. If they develop the kind of piety which leads to devotion (*bhahty-unmukhi sukrti*), then they can give up their desires and begin worshipping the Lord.

*arta artharathi dui sakama-bhitare gani jijnasu jnani dui moksa-kama mani ei
cari sukrti haya maha-bhagyavan tat-tat-kamadi chari haya suddha-bhaktiman*

"I consider the distressed person and the seeker of wealth to be materialistic devotees, while I take the curious person and the philosopher to be desirous of liberation. All four of these types of pious individuals are to be considered greatly fortunate for they gradually give up the desires which rule them and become pure devotees." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.24.95-96)

Self-Deception And Cheating — The Desires For Bhukti And Mukti

The spotless authority for spiritual knowledge is the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Its purpose is to describe a religious system that is free from all self-deception. This is stated in the introductory verses of the *Bhagavatam*: *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'traparamo nirmat-saranam satam* (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.1.2). Although all the four objects of human life are considered to be *kaitava*, or selfdeception arising out of ignorance, the desire for liberation is the deepest darkness of all because it can completely eradicate any gains one makes on the

path of devotion.

Sridhara Svami, named by Vaishnavas as the prime preserver of devotion for his commentary on the *SrimadBhagavatam*, explains the words *projjhita-kaitava* in the following way: "The prefix *pra* indicates that the desire for liberation is completely rejected." (*pra-sabdena moksabhisandhir api nirasta iti—Chaitanya Charitamrta 1.1.93*)

On this basis, the purity of devotion is measured by the extent to which it is free of desire for sense gratification and liberation, or the four goals of life—religiosity, material achievements, sense enjoyment and salvation. Elsewhere Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami speaks of all auspicious or inauspicious actions (*subhasubha-karma*) as being the darkness of ignorance which interferes with the attainment of *bhakti* (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 1.1.94*). Thus the words of this introductory Bhagavata verse lead one to the definition of pure devotion given by Rupa Gosvami — that it is free from any other desire (*anyabhilasita-sunyam*) other than for the pleasure of the Lord.

The causeless mercy of Gaura-Nitai results in the destruction of this ignorant self-deception and permits the knowledge of pure devotion to rise like the sun in the darkness.

Rupa Gosvami also compares the desires for sense gratification and liberation to a witch:

bhukti-mukti-sprha yavat pisaci hrdisi vartate tavad bhakti-sukhambodheh katham abhyudayo bhavet

"How is it possible for the ocean of devotional happiness to appear in the heart as long as the witches of desire for sense enjoyment and liberation remain present there?" (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.22, Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.19.176*)

But just as such desires interfere with the development of pure devotion, devotional service is the only means by which they can be destroyed. The basis of all sinful desire is ignorance or the rejection of Krishna. The seed of all sin, i.e., the tendency to sin, is present in this ignorance. From there sinful activity is inevitable. The word *klesa* is used to refer to ignorance, sin and the seed of sin (*klesas tu papam tad-bijam avidya ceti te tridha*). Only the process of devotional service consisting of hearing and chanting as given by the spiritual master can

destroy these Mesas.

klesaghni subhada moksa-laghuta-krt sudurlabha sandrananda-visesatma sri-krsnakarsim ca sa

"The six characteristics of *bhakti* are (1) it destroys all Mesas, (2) it bestows all auspiciousness, (3) it renders liberation insignificant, (4) it is very rare, (5) it contains at its core an especially intense blissfulness, (6) it is capable of attracting Krishna." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.18*)

Devotional Service Purifies Desires

The king of elephants, Gajendra, who gave up all hope of saving his life and simply prayed for the Lord's mercy in his affliction, is considered to be an example of someone who came to devotion out of his distress (*arta*). Saunaka and the *rishis* are taken as the example of those who gave up an ordinary desire for knowledge to become devotees (*jijnasu*). At a certain point Dhruva Maharaja realized that his desire for becoming a great king was a waste of time and that the real value (*artha*) in life is the *paramartha* of spiritual life. He then became a devotee. And finally, the four Kumaras, Sukadeva, and the Nava Yogindra all gave up following the philosophical path to seek exclusive devotion to the Lord. In each of these cases the piety leading to devotion (*bhakti-unmukhi sukrti*) brought them this good fortune.

Bad association has the effect of gradually awakening desires for liberation, sense gratification, or mystic powers in a person. The association of devotees, however, has the opposite effect. Through their company, the individual develops spiritual intelligence and faith in pure devotional service. As a result, one realizes the insignificance of liberation, sense gratification and mystic power and takes up the practice of Bhakti yoga with great intensity.

This was stated by Sukadeva when he said that in all circumstances of life, regardless of motivation, the only duty of every living being is to engage in pure and causeless devotional service:

akamah sarva-kamo va moksa-kama udara-dhih tivrena bhakti-yogena yajeta purusam param

"The person of expansive intelligence should worship the Supreme Person by the process of intense Bhakti yoga, whether he is a pure devotee without any

personal desire, or someone filled with all kinds of desires, or one who seeks liberation." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 2.3.10)

In his discussion of this verse, Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami analyses the word *udaradhih* ("of expansive intelligence") as follows:

*buddhiman-arthe yadi vicara-jna haya nija-kama lagiha tabe krsnere
bhajaya bhakti binu kona sadhana dite nare phala saba phala deya bhakti
svatantra prabala aja-gala-stana-nyaya anya sadhana ataeva hari bhaje
buddhiman jana udara mahati janra sarvottama buddhi nana kame bhaje tabu
paya bhakti-siddhi bhakti-prabhava sei kama charana krsna-pade bhakti karaya
gune akarsiya*

"The meaning of the word 'intelligent' is to have good judgment. It is a sign of good judgment to engage in devotional service, even if one has desires for sense gratification or liberation. This is because no other process can yield its promised results unless supplemented by *bhakti*. *Bhakti*, however, is so strong and independent that it can give all results on its own. These other practices are unable to yield their results. Knowing this, an intelligent person worships Krishna exclusively. One who has this kind of broad, deep and superior intelligence serves the Lord even if he has some motive, with the result that he eventually attains the perfection of devotion. The power of devotion is such that it makes one give up all material desires and, by attracting one to the transcendental qualities of the Lord, bestows devotion at Krishna's feet."

(*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.24.91-95)

Visvanatha Cakravarti interprets the word *tivrena* ("intensely") as meaning the devotee should engage in transcendental loving service without any mixture of karma or *jnana* practices. (See also the commentary on *Srimad Bhagavatam* 5.19.26.)

The power of even basic devotional acts is such that one can be liberated by them.

krsna tomara hana jadi bale eka-bara maya-bandha haite krsna tare kare para

"If someone says just once, 'Krishna, I am Yours,' then Krishna delivers him from bondage in the illusory energy." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.33)

Lord Ramacandra Himself made this assurance when telling Sugriva about His

meeting with Vibhisana:

*sakra eva prapanno yas tavasmiti ca yacate abhayam sarvada tasmai dadamy
etad vratam mama*

"It is My promise that if someone truly surrenders to Me and says just once, 'I am Yours,' asking for freedom from fear, then I grant him fearlessness for all eternity."

Bhakti transforms the devotee, even if the motivation of one's service is based on other kinds of desires, as the external acts of devotion attract Krishna's mercy. The Lord is so merciful that He quickly cleanses the heart of such a worshiper, ridding it of the desires for sense gratification and liberation. He even goes so far as to give him love of God, even if this was not the original object of his performance of devotional practice. Srila Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami has also written:

*bhukti-mukti-siddhi-kami subuddhi jadi haya gadha-bhakti-yoge tabe krsnere
bhajaya anya-kami jadi kare krsnera bhajana na magiteha krsna tare dena sva-
carana krsna kahe ama bhaje mage visaya-sukha amrta chari visa mage ei bara
murkha ami vijna ei murkhe visaya kene diba sva-caranamrta diya visaya
bhulaiba kama Iagi krsne bhaje paya krsna-rase kama chari dasa haite haya
abhilase*

"Due to bad association, the living entity desires material happiness, liberation (merging into the impersonal aspect of the Lord), or engages in mystic yoga for material power. If such a person actually becomes intelligent, he takes to Krishna consciousness by engaging himself in intense devotional service to Lord Sri Krishna. If someone engages in devotional service while harboring selfish desires, the Lord still gives him shelter at His lotus feet, even though He was not asked for it. The Lord says to Himself, 'This foolish person is worshipping Me and at the same time is looking for material sense gratification. He is discarding divine nectar in order to drink poison. I am wise enough to not give the poison of sense gratification to this fool. Instead, I will give him the ambrosia of My lotus feet and make him forget such inferior sensual pleasures.' Those who worship Krishna with some other objective still get a taste of the joys of devotional service. They thus give up their desires and begin to crave only to become His servant." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.3741)

The above series of verses from the *Chaitanya Charitamrta* have been commented on by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura in his *Amrta-pravaha-bhasya* as follows: "As a result of bad character and bad association, a living entity develops desires for sense enjoyment, liberation, or mystic powers.

If by some chance one comes into contact with pure devotees it is still possible to develop the clear intelligence to abandon all desire for such things. Those who desire sensual pleasures, salvation or mystic prowess are bereft of any desire for pure devotion. Nevertheless, if out of some good fortune they come to engage in the practices of pure devotion, then Krishna is so merciful to them that He will bestow *prema* upon them, even if that was not their objective.

"Krishna says to Himself, 'This person was seeking something else but still has engaged in My service; however a lower nature continues to infect his heart. He has given up the nectarean cup of *prema* and wants to drink from a poison chalice, which demonstrates how foolish he is. This inability to pray for the nectar of immortality is a sign of ignorance. Even so, I am both wise and experienced; I know what is needed for the perfection of life, so I will give him a taste of the nectar of My lotus feet. This ecstasy causes one to forget forever the bitter taste of material pleasures.'"

The demigods thus sing the following verse in the Bhagavatam about the nature of the Lord's mercy:

*satyam disaty arthitam arthito nram naivarthado yat punar
arthitdyatah svayam vidhatte bhajatam anicchatam iccha-pidhanam nija-pada-
pallavam*

"It is true that Lord Krishna fulfills one's desire whenever someone petitions Him to do so. However, He does not award anything which, once having been received, will be asked for again and again. Even if these worshipers show no desire for His lotus feet, the Lord personally bestows this benediction on them whereby they forget all their transitory material desires." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 5.19.27)

kama lagi krsne bhaje pay a krsna-rase kama chari dasa haite haya abhilase

"Someone who engages in Lord Krishna's devotional service out of egotistical motivation instead acquires a taste to serve Krishna. As a result one gives up his material desires and longs to become the Lord's eternal servant." (*Chaitanya*

Charitamrta 2.22.51)

According to Bhaktivinoda Thakura, "If someone has the good fortune to come into the association of the devotees and take up devotional service to Krishna as a means to achieving some selfish mundane purpose, these objectives are soon revealed to be of little value as a result of the higher taste obtained from *bhakti*. Krishna worship is so pure and holy a thing that anyone who comes into contact with it soon rejects their other desires and seeks to become a servant of the Lord." (*Amrta-pravaha-bhasya*)

This power of *bhakti* to make one forget material desires was demonstrated by the great child devotee Dhruva who refused the boon which the Supreme Lord offered him saying:

sthanabhilasi tapasi sthito'ham tvam praptavan deva-munindra-guhyam kacam vicinvann api divya-ratnam svamin krtartho smi varam na yace

"O my Lord, I took up the practice of penance and austerities out of a wish to become a great ruler. Now that I have attained You, who remain hidden to even great demigods, saintly persons and kings, I feel like someone who had been searching for fragments of glass but has found instead a most valuable jewel. I am now so fulfilled that there is no benediction left for me to ask of You." (*Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*, 7.28; quoted at *Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.22.42* and *2.24.219*)

Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura comments in *Anubhasya*, "The association of pure devotees, Krishna's mercy and devotion to Krishna share this common characteristic: they rid one of all taste for associating with non-devotees, or for any good fortune arising from the illusory energy, as well as any tendency to take up the paths of karma, *jnana* and yoga." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.24.104*)

The Transformation Of The Desires For Knowledge And Liberation

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura writes in his commentary on *Srimad Bhagavatam 1.1.4* that the seers led by Saunaka were originally contaminated by attachment to works based in desire (*sakama-karma*). As a result of hearing the Puranic literature from Romaharsana and reflecting on its contents, they came to the stage of desiring knowledge (*jijnasu*). Later, as a result of the association of the saintly Ugrasrava, they came to aspire for the taste of devotion. The idea that they were originally engaged in fruitive activity is evidenced by their words to

Suta Gosvami:

karmany asminn anasvase dhuma-dhumratmanam bhavan apayayati govinda-pada-padmasavam madhu

"We were engaged in the performance of this sacrifice, the fruits of which are uncertain due to the many imperfections in the ritual, until our bodies were blackened by smoke. But you came and revived us by giving the honey nectar from Govinda's lotus feet to drink." (*Srimad Bhagavatam 1.18.12*)

After they entered the devotional path, the curiosity of the sages became a less dominant motivation and their sacrificial performance was carried out for the purpose of going to the abode of Hari, Vaikuntha.

The speaker of the *Bhagavatam*, Sukadeva Gosvami, also told Maharaja Pariksit that he had been firmly fixed in oneness with the undifferentiated Brahman when the nectar of Krishna *katha* attracted his mind.

parinisthito 'pi nairgunya uttama-sloka-lilaya grhita-ceta rajarse akhyanam yad adhitavan

"O saintly King, even though I was certainly situated in perfect transcendence, my mind was forcibly attracted by the delineation of the pastimes of the Lord, who is described by enlightened verses. And so I took up its study." (*Srimad Bhagavatam 2.1.9*)

Elsewhere, the same was stated by Suta Gosvami:

barer gunaksipta-matir bhagavan badarayanih adhyagan mahad akhyanam nityam visnu-jana-priyah

"The greatly powerful Sukadeva Gosvami, son of Vyasadeva, was overcome with attraction to the qualities of Hari. He thus underwent the study of this great narration of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and became eternally dear to the devotees of Vishnu." (*Srimad Bhagavatam 1.7.11*)

The following account is found in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purana*. While his son Sukadeva was absorbed in *samadhi* in the midst of the jungle, Vyasadeva found a way to make him hear some verses he had written glorifying the Lord. These verses were so powerful that Sukadeva's *samadhi* was disrupted when he heard

them. Their sweetness so attracted Suka that he began to regret the time he had lost in his Brahman meditation and showed his displeasure by saying '*dhikl*'. Being omniscient, he knew that the verses were from the Bhagavatam and that their author was his own father. As a result, he immediately went to Vyasa and asked to be instructed in the *Bhagavatam*. In this way, the goddess of devotion conquered the father and son, both of whom had direct experience of Brahman, and thus brought the entire universe under her control.

The four Kumaras were sages who after having direct realization of Brahman became attracted to devotional service.

tasyaravinda-nayanasya padaravinda-kinjalka-misra-tulasi-makaranda-vayuh antar-gatah sva-vivarena cakara tesam

"When the breeze carrying the aroma of *tulasi* leaves from the toes of the lotus feet of the lotuseyed Lord entered the nostrils of those sages, their bodies and minds were disturbed, even though they were fixed in consciousness of the imperishable Brahman." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 3.15.43)

The nine great yogis, the Nava Yogindras, were also knowers of Brahman who were attracted by Lord Krishna's qualities and then took up His devotional service. The scriptural evidence is found in the *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*:

aklesam kamala-bhuvah pravisya gosthim kurvantah sruti-sirasam srutim srutajnah uttungam yadu-pura-sangamaya rangam yogindrah pulaka-bhrto navapy avapuh

"Though those nine great masters of yoga were already free from distress and conversant in Vedic knowledge, they came to Lord Brahma's assembly and heard the *Gopala-tapani Upanishad*, the topmost portion of the Veda. When they thus learned about the supremacy of Krishna, they were covered with ecstatic symptoms and developed a great enthusiasm for visiting Lord Krishna's city of Dvaraka." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 3.1.20, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.140)

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami summarizes the above descriptions of these Brahma *jnanis* who were later attracted by devotion to Krishna as such:

janma haite suka-sanakadi brahma-maya krsna-gunakrsta hana krsnere bhajaya sanahadyera krsna-krpaya saurabhe hare mana gunakrsta hana kare

*nirmala bhajana vyasa-krpaya sukadevera liladi-smarana krsna-gunakrsta hana
karena bhajana nava-yogisvara janma haite sadhaka jnani vidhi-siva-narada-
mukhe krsna-guna suni*

"Although Sukadeva Gosvami and the four Kumaras were always absorbed in the thought of impersonal Brahman and thus considered Brahmavadis, they were nonetheless attracted by the transcendental pastimes and qualities of Krishna and started to worship Him. By Krishna's mercy, the minds of the four Kumaras were attracted by His aroma. Attracted by His qualities, they took up His pure devotional service. By Vyasa's mercy, Sukadeva started to remember Lord Krishna's pastimes. Thus attracted by Krishna's transcendental qualities, he also became a devotee and engaged in His service. The nine great mystics were practitioners on the path of knowledge from their very births. However, they were transformed by hearing Lord Krishna's qualities from Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva, and the great sage Narada." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.24.115-118*)

*bhaktira svabhava brahma haite kare akarsana divya deha diya karaya krsnera
bhajana bhakta-deha paile haya gunera smarana gunakrsta hana hare nirmala
bhajana*

"The nature of devotion is such that it attracts the mind away from the joys of Brahman realization. It gives the devotee a transcendental body so he can engage in Lord Krishna's service. Once he has such a body, the devotee meditates on Krishna's transcendental qualities. After being attracted to these qualities, he engages in pure devotional service." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.24.110-111*)

All these examples of liberated souls being attracted by the qualities of the Lord give weight to the claim of Suta Gosvami, who told the sages at Naimisaranya:

*atmaramas ca munayo nirgrantha apy urukrame kurvanty ahaituhim
bhaktim ittham-bhuta-guno harih*

"Though freed from all material ties, all the different types of *atmaramas* who take pleasure in the self engage in causeless devotional service unto the Lord of glorious feats. Truly, the Lord possesses transcendental qualities and therefore can attract everyone, including liberated souls." (*Srimad Bhagavatam 1.7.11*)

Even Sankaracarya writes in his commentary on the *Nrsimha-tapani Upanishad* that liberated souls willingly take a body so that they can worship the Lord (*mukta api lilaya vigraham krtva bhagavantam bhajante*). This characteristic of

devotional service is called *moksa-laghuta-krt*, meaning that it diminishes the attraction of liberation.

Devotion Must Ultimately Be Exclusive

In view of the preceding discussion, the conclusion is clear:

ata eva maya-moha chari buddhiman nitya-tattva krsna-bhakti karena sandhana

"Therefore an intelligent person gives up his enchantment with this illusory material world and searches out the eternal truth of devotion to Krishna."

The power of devotion to destroy desire is applicable to any of the five principal devotional activities.

*sat-sanga krsna-seva bhagavata nama vraje vasa ei panca sadhana
pradhana ei-panca-madhye eka svalpa yadi haya subuddhi janera hay a krsna-
premodaya udara mahati janra sarvottama buddhi nana kame bhaje tabu pay a
bhakti-siddhi bhakti-prabhava sei kama charana krsna-pade bhakti karaya gunē
akarsiya*

"The five most powerful aspects of devotional service are association with devotees, serving Lord Krishna's deity form, hearing the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, chanting the Holy Names, and residing in Vraja *dhama*. If intelligent persons come into even minimal contact with any one of these five types of devotional practice, their dormant love for Krishna is awakened. Those who have this kind of broad, deep, and superior intelligence serve the Lord even if they have some motive, with the result that they eventually attain the perfection of devotion. The power of devotion is such that it makes one give up all material desires and bestows devotion to Krishna's feet by attracting one to the transcendental qualities of the Lord." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.24.187-188, 190,192)

Srila Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami also named these five principle devotional activities in the twenty-second chapter of the *Chaitanya Charitamrta's Madhya-lila*. But there he mentions that without determined and faithful adherence to these practices, one cannot expect the fruit of love of Godhead to manifest. Here also, the symptoms of superior intelligence are given: "Having given up both gross and subtle sense gratification, one who dedicates oneself to the satisfaction of Krishna's senses is truly intelligent." True love for Krishna has absolutely no

element of self-directed sensual desire. If one has come to this understanding, then such a person deserves the title *udara-dhi*, as mentioned in the *Bhagavatam* verse quoted above (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 2.3.10): "Whether persons desire everything or nothing, or they desire to merge into the existence of the Lord, such individuals are intelligent only if they worship Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by intensely rendering transcendental loving service."

Without this kind of perspicacity, one will confuse pure devotion with other kinds of devotion that are mixed or dominated by philosophical speculation or other purposes. One will take such kinds of ignorance as wisdom, sectarianism as liberality, and will ultimately be misled. In the material world, people think that any single spiritual path is just as good as another—*jata mata tata patha*. In fact, there is only one way to reach the abode of Krishna, Goloka Vrindavan. That path is the discipline of Bhakti yoga. This is made clear both in the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

This kind of exclusiveness is also described in the glorification of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, *Gita-mahatmya*:

ekam sastram devaki-putra-gitam eko devo devaki-putra eva eko mantras tasya namani yam. karmapy ekam tasya devasya seva

"There is only one scripture — that which was sung by the Son of Devaki. There is only God — He who is known as the Son of Devaki. There is only one hymn to be sung — the names of the Son of Devaki. There is only one duty—the service of this one supreme God."

The next chapter explores how one attains the great fortune of coming to devotional service and the manner in which it is cultivated.

CHAPTER 3 The Beginnings Of Service

It is said that only after wandering for many lifetimes throughout the fourteen worlds¹ does a fortunate living soul meet the Vaishnava guru through the mercy of Krishna. Through the guru, one gets the seed of the devotional creeper.

*bhramite bhramite jadi sadhu-vaidya paya tanra upadesa-mantre pisaci
palaya krsna-bhakti paya tabe krsna nikate jaya tate krsna bhaje kare gurura
sevana maya-jala chute paya tabe krsnera carana*

"After wandering through the universe in this bewildered condition, if the *jiva* can somehow find a saintly person to act as an exorcist, then through such a person's instructions, which act as a powerful spell, the witch of Maya's mastery is overcome and she is forced to run for her life. The fortunate individual then finds pure devotion to Krishna and a place by His side. There, he worships Krishna while continuing to serve the guru's lotus feet. As a result he is freed from the illusory entanglements of material life and attains Krishna's lotus feet." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.14-15, 25)

*kona bhagye karo samsara ksayonmukha haya sadhu-sange tabe krsne rati
upajaya*

"When by some good fortune, it is time for one's material entanglement to come to an end, then an attraction to Krishna develops within them in the association of devotees." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.45)

King Mucukunda stated this idea in the prayers he spoke to Lord Krishna after being delivered by Him:

*bhavapavargo bhramato yada bhavaj janasya tarhy acyuta sat-samagamah sat-
sangamo yarhi tadaiva sad-gatau paravarese tvayi jay ate ratih*

"O infallible Lord! When the time has come for those wandering throughout the universes to be finished with their material existence, they come into contact with devotees. Only as a result of such association with devotees can one develop an attraction for You, the destination of the saintly, the Lord of the

universe."

(Srimad Bhagavatam 10.51.53)

Without the association of devotees, no one can take up the practice of devotional service. Without such practice, no one can be rid of sinful tendencies with the result that no one can reach the goal of love for Krishna. However, no one gets the association of devotees without first having the kind of piety that leads to devotional service (*bhaktyunmukhi sukrti*). Therefore, Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami says:

krsnajadi krpa kare kona bhagyavane

guru-antaryami-rupe sikhaya apane

sadhu-sange krsna-bhaktye sraddha jadi haya

*bhakti-phala prema hay a samsara jaya ksaya mahat-krpa vina kona karme
bhakti naya krsna-bhakti dure rahu samsara nahe ksaya*

"When Krishna decides to be kind to some fortunate soul, He then personally directs that person from within as the Supersoul and from without as the spiritual master. If one's faith in devotional service to Krishna is awakened through the association of devotees, then one develops dormant love for Krishna by which material, conditional existence comes to an end. Unless one is favored by a great devotee, no activity can be considered to take on the characteristics of devotional service. One cannot even be relieved from the bondage of material existence, what to speak of attaining Krishna bhakti. "(*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.47,49,51)

The Piety Which Leads To Devotion

In the texts quoted above, the word "fortune" is a reference to the kind of previous pious activity that ultimately leads to bhakti. This kind of predisposition to spiritual life causes the awakening of a desire for association with people advanced in spiritual matters Through this kind of association, a taste for devotional service is developed.

*bhaktis tu bhagavad-bhakta-sangena parijayate sat-sangah prapyate
pumbhah sukrtaih purva-sancitaih*

"Devotion is born out of the association with devotees of the Lord. Contact with such saintly persons is given to those who have accumulated pious merit in previous lifetimes." (*Brhan-naradiyaPurana, Hari-bhakti-vilasa 10.279*)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura explains this development in his *Amrta-pravaha-bhasya* (2.22.45): "The devotional scriptures call the results of one's past piety 'good fortune.' Past piety is of three types depending on whether it leads to devotion, sense gratification or to liberation. All acts in this world that give rise to pure devotion are called *bhakti-unmukhi sukrti*, while those that lead to sense gratification bring *bhoganmukhi sukrti* and those which lead to liberation give *moksonmukhi sukrti*. The pious activities that awaken the *jiva's* constitutional activity of devotional service to the Lord bring entanglement in material nature to an end."

The conclusion is that the association of devotees comes about as a result of pious activities connected to devotional service, or *bhakti-unmukhi sukrti*. This type of piety originates in accidental service to Vishnu or the Vaishnavas. One need not have spent a great amount of time in the company of devotees. A *lava* is equal to 4/45ths of a second, the time that it takes to blink. It is said that even as little as a *lava's* time of association with advanced devotees will result in the attainment of all perfections. This is the extent of the transcendental potency of such association:

sadhu sanga sadhu sanga sarva sastra kaya lava-matra sadhu sange sarva siddhi haya

"All the scriptures again and again glorify the association of devotees. Just a moment's association with devotees results in all perfection." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.22.54*)

tulayama lavenapi na svargam napunar-bhavam bhagavat-sangi-sangasya martyanam him utasisah

"We cannot compare heaven or liberation to even the briefest moment of association with the companions of the Lord. If this is so, then how can the miserable benedictions of the worldly be considered their equal?" (*Srimad Bhagavatam 1.18.13, Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.22.55*)

Faith

The piety that comes from contact with a saintly person results in a growing detachment from this world with its fleeting pleasures and frustrations. This in turn leads to a desire to associate with people who are cultivating the eternal truth. Upon hearing the Krishna conscious discourses from the lips of a saintly person, the fortunate soul develops faith, or the certain belief that by engaging in devotion to Krishna, all his other obligations will be fulfilled.

When one hears the explanation of the *Bhagavad-gita* from a devotee, he learns that although Krishna at first seems to give value to various spiritual paths, such as Vedic sacrifice, *karma-yoga*, and *jnana-yoga*, in the final analysis, these paths are relegated to a secondary status and Bhakti yoga is given precedence. Krishna's final order prescribes devotional service as the topmost process of spiritual realization. The general rule is given that where there are conflicting instructions, the last instruction should be given precedence — *purva-parayor para-vidhir balavan*. Thus *Gita* verses such as *man-mana bhava mad-bhakto mad-yaji mam namaskuru* and *sarva-dharmanparityajya mam ekam saranam vraja* are to be taken as Krishna's final word. The living being who has faith in this final instruction will become a devotee, renounce all other activities, and engage in Krishna *bhajana*.

In an important verse in the Bhagavatam, Lord Kapiladeva instructs his mother Devahuti about the development of faith beginning with the association of devotees and the hearing of Krishna conscious topics from them. Such faith implies the taking up of disciplined devotional activity. Once one begins such practice, one's inner life develops through *rati* or *bhava*, the stage of devotional feeling, and from there to devotion in its pure state, *prema*.

satam prasangan mama virya-samvido bhavanti hrt-kama-rasayanah kathah taj-josanad asv apavarga-vartmani sraddha ratir bhaktir anukramisyati

"My heroic pastimes are very pleasing to the ear and satisfying to the heart when heard in the association of pure devotees. As a result of joyfully relishing these pastimes in such association, one quickly advances on the path of liberation, passing through the stages of faith (*sraddha*), the revelation of one's divine relationship with Krishna (*rati*), and true love for Him (*bhakti*). "

(*SrimadBhagavatam* 3.25.25)

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami has defined faith (*sraddha*) in the following way:

sraddha-sabde kahe visvasa sudraha niscaya krsna-bhakti kaile sarva-karma krta haya

"The word *sraddha* refers to a firm and confident belief that by engaging in devotion to Krishna alone, all of one's duties will be fulfilled." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.22.62*)

Such faith is based in an understanding of Krishna's factual position as the very root of all existence:

yatha taror mula-nisecanena tropyanti tat-skandha-bhujopasakhah pranopaharaca yathendriyanam tathaiva sarvarhanam acyutejya

"As a tree's trunk, branches, twigs, and leaves are nourished by watering its roots, and as all the senses are satisfied by giving food to the stomach, so similarly, all living beings are served by worshiping the infallible Supreme Person." (*SrimadBhagavatam 4.31.14*)

This means that by worshiping the Supreme Lord, all other gods and objects of worship are automatically served. If the Lord is pleased, the entire universe is pleased—*tasmims tustejagat tustam prinite prinitam jagat*. A person who has this kind of faith is eligible to engage in devotional service.

As stated in the *Bhagavatam* (11.20.9), until one's faith has been awakened by listening to discussions of devotional subjects, one will continue to have a taste for works and knowledge. This preliminary kind of faith is called scriptural or doctrinal faith. Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes the following in his *Amnaya Sutra*:

sraddha tv anyopaya-varjam bhakty-unmukhi-citta-vrtti-visesah sa ca saranapatti-laksana

"*Sraddha*, faith, is a particular mental attitude directed toward devotion that rejects all other means of spiritual achievement. It is characterized by the process of surrender (*saranapatti*)."

Until one has this kind of faith, there is no chance that one will get a taste for listening to the *Bhagavatam* and other scriptures of its type. So this faith is the seed of the creeper of devotion. After wandering throughout the universes, the fortunate jiva who has accumulated a stock of the appropriate merit gets the seed of devotion, faith, by the mercy of Krishna and the spiritual master.

Planting The Seed

The seed of faith is planted in the soil of the heart. Devotional activities such as hearing the topics of Krishna from *sadhus* and then repeating them are the water that irrigates this seed, which soon sprouts in the form of the creeper of devotion. The creeper then grows and grows until it crosses the Viraja River, pierces through the Brahmaloaka to the spiritual sky, and then goes on to Goloka Vrindavan where it gives forth the divine, delightful fruits of *prema*.

*mali hana kare sei bija dropana sravana-kirtana-jale karaye secana upajiya
bare lata brahmada bhedi jaya viraja brahma-loka bhedi para-vyoma
paya tabejdya tad-upari goloka-vrindavana krsna-carana-kalpa-vrkse kare
arohana*

"The jiva then takes the role of a gardener, plants the seed of faith in the heart and waters it with the acts of hearing and chanting. The creeper sprouts and starts to grow until it penetrates the coverings of the universe, crosses the Viraja River, passes through the Brahmaloaka until it reaches the spiritual sky. From there, it continues to grow until it reaches Goloka Vrindavan where it winds around the desire tree of Krishna's lotus feet." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.19.152-154*)

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, foremost of Sri Rupa Gosvami's followers, has also taken up Sri Rupa's description of the gradual process that leads to *prema-bhakti*, devotion in pure love:

*kona bhagye konajivera sraddhajadi haya tabe sei jiva sadhu-sanga je
karaya sadhu-sanga haite haya sravana-kirtana sadhana-bhaktie haya
sarvanartha-nivartana anartha-nivrtti haile bhaktie nistha haya nistha haite
sravanadye ruci upajaya ruci haite bhaktie haya asakti pracura asakti haite
citta janme krsne prity-ankura sei bhava gadha haile dhare prema-nama sei
prema prayojana sarvananda-dhama*

"If by some great good fortune one develops faith in Krishna, that jiva begins to associate with devotees. As a result of associating with devotees, one takes up practical devotional service beginning with hearing and chanting. Such practical devotional service frees one from all unwanted material contamination and that leads to constancy. When one has *nistha*, or firmness in one's practice, then a real taste develops for hearing and chanting and the other devotional practices.

The next step is the awakening of a deep attachment and from that attachment the first manifestations of love finally appear in the heart like the sprouting tree. These first ecstatic manifestations are called *bhava*, which intensify to become love of Godhead or *prema*, the ultimate goal of life and the reservoir of all pleasure." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.23.9-13)

The fruits of devotion are nectarean, that is, supremely delightful in their essence. Once one has tasted that fruit, one feels fully satisfied. All sadness, bewilderment, fear and longing are removed forever from one's heart and a strong distaste for all desires for sense gratification, liberation or mystic powers is awakened. Hatred, jealousy, enviousness, and the tendency to criticize others no longer find a place within the heart. Then one is not tempted by the satisfactions of sex, riches or power and remains constantly fixed in the culture of Krishna consciousness through hearing, chanting, and remembering. One has no other duty but activities executed for the pleasure of the Lord. Other than the knowledge related to developing Krishna consciousness—*sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana tattvas*—one has no interest in accumulating any other knowledge. Such a person never thinks that any *yogic* practice has precedence over Bhakti yoga.

A living being can become eligible for this treasure of devotion only through the grace of Krishna's internal, joy-bestowing energy. One who has been lucky enough to associate with a devotee blessed by the *hladini-sakti* inherits this treasure. This is why association with Krishna's devotees is said to be the root cause of devotion to Krishna. Just like a person who wishes to make money must come into the association of rich people, a person seeking the wealth of devotion must enter into the association of people who are rich in devotion. Then one must accept instruction and strictly following such guidance they enter a life of devotion.

CHAPTER 4 Serve The Lord's Devotees

When in Prayaga, Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu met Rupa Gosvami and instructed him in the process of devotional service. In the course of their conversations, which are recorded in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta*, Mahaprabhu told Rupa Gosvami just how rare a pure devotee is. The Lord said that the unlimited living entities can be divided into two categories, the eternally liberated and the eternally conditioned. The conditioned entities are further divided into those that can move and those that cannot. Those whose consciousness is more covered, such as trees, are the non-moving creatures, while the moving beings include birds, aquatics and land animals, all of which have more developed consciousness.

Of all the land creatures, only a small proportion are humans. Among them, the Mlecchas, Pulindas, and Sabaras are outside the pale of civilized society, which includes only those who follow the Vedic principles. Half of those who follow the Vedas simply give lip service to the scriptures while in fact they live irreligious and sinful lives. Further, of those who follow the Vedic principles, most are engaged in fruitive ritual activity. One out of many such fruitive workers may become a philosopher. Among the many millions of such philosophers, one may actually achieve liberation; but it is very difficult to find a pure devotee of Lord Krishna even amongst many millions of liberated persons.

Up to and including the liberated person, everyone is bound by desire, either gross or subtle. Those who are engaged in fruitive activity are bound by a desire for material enjoyment (*bhukti*), whether here in this life or after death in heaven. Those who are attached to the quest for knowledge are bound by a desire for liberation, while the yogis are bound by the desire for spiritual powers. As long as there are desires for sensual enjoyment, salvation or spiritual perfections in the heart, one will be disturbed. One who is engaged in devotional service to Krishna stops desiring the satisfaction of his own senses and seeks only the pleasure of his Lord. For this reason, the devotee alone truly knows peace.

krsna-bhakta niskama ataeva santa bhukti-mukti-siddhi-kami sakali asanta

"Because a devotee of Lord Krishna is desireless, he is peaceful. Fruitive workers desire material enjoyment, *jnanis* desire liberation, and yogis desire material opulence; therefore they are all lusty and cannot be peaceful."

(*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.19.149)

*muktanam api siddhanam narayana-parayanah sudurlabhah prasantatma kotisv
api maha-mune*

"Of all liberated and perfected beings, O great sage, one who is devoted to Narayana is most rare. He alone amongst countless millions has found divine peace." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 6.14.5)

Tadlya—"those Connected To The Lord"

Those special beings who have come into intimate contact with the Lord are known as *tadiya*, "His own." Vrindavan Dasa Thakura has written in his *Chaitanya Bhagavata*:

*Bhagavata tulasi gangaya bhakta-jane caturaha vigraha krsna ei can sane jiva-
nyasa karile sri-murti puja haya janma-matra e cari isvara vede kaya*

"The Supreme Lord is always associated with the four following things: the book *Bhagavata*, Tulasi, the Ganges, and the devotees. The deity form of the Lord becomes worshipable after it has been consecrated ritually and the Lord's presence has been invoked. Scripture says that these four things, however, are innately divine." (*Chaitanya Bhagavata* 2.21.81 -82)

The book *Bhagavata*, the person *Bhagavata*, Tulasi, and the Ganges are all considered to be manifestations of the Lord Himself because of their intimate connection with Him. They are called His *prakasa-vigraha*. The deity form is not considered worshipable until the *prana-pratistha* ritual has been performed. These four *prakasa-vigrahas*, however, are considered to be naturally worshipable; there is no need for any kind of ritual in order to elevate them to that status. They are all spiritual and due to their natural connection to the Lord, are considered to be in a relationship to us as masters to servants. They are always to be considered distinct from the material nature and never looked upon as potential objects of sense enjoyment.

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami expresses the same idea in *Chaitanya Charitamrta*:

tadiya tulasi vaisnava mathura Bhagavata ei carira seva haya krsnera abhimata

"The word *tadiya* refers to those things or persons which are connected to the Lord: Tulasi, Krishna's devotees, the land of Mathura, and the *SrimadBhagavatam*. Krishna is pleased when one renders service to any of these four things." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.22.121*)

This last couplet is found in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta* in the context of an enumeration of 64 elements of devotional service in practice. Of these sixty-four devotional practices, five are considered to be most important.

*sadhu-sanga nama-kirtana bhagavata-sravana mathura-vasa sri-murtira
sraddhaya sevana*

"One should associate with devotees, chant the Holy Name of the Lord, hear *Srimad Bhagavatam*, reside at Mathura, and worship the deity with faith and veneration." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.22.214*)

These five limbs of devotional service are considered to be the best of all because even a slight performance of them awakens love for Krishna. Whether a person executes only one or many of these processes of devotional service, love for Krishna can quickly manifest. (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.22.214*) Clearly, there is a close relationship between these five most potent devotional activities and the concept of *tadiya*, or things related to the Lord.

What needs to be particularly emphasized is that service to the Vaishnavas cannot be separated from any aspect of devotional service. Thus Srila Narottama dasa Thakura sings, *chariya vaisnava-seva nistara payeche keba*—"Who has ever attained supreme beatitude without serving the Vaishnavas?" (*Prema-bhakti-candrika*) Without the association and service of a perfected devotee of the Lord, the person *Bhagavata*, no aspect of devotional service can be exercised properly.

Furthermore, as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu taught Sanatana Gosvami, association with devotees is important at all stages of one's devotional life.

*krsna-bhakti-janma-mula haya sadhu-sanga krsna-prema janme tenho punah
mukhya anga*

"The root cause of devotional service to Krishna is association with advanced

devotees. And when one's love for Krishna awakens, the association with devotees becomes the chief element in one's devotional service." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.83)

Devotion to Krishna is the fruit of associating with devotees. When that devotion attains its most mature state and is transformed into pure love for the Lord, then associating with devotees continues to be the essential expression of such love.

The Special Status Of The Vaishnavas

In two verses from *Padmottara-khanda*, Mahadeva emphasized the glory of worshipping *tadiyas* to Parvati:

*aradhananam sarvesam visnor aradhanam param tasmāt parataram
devi tadiyanam samarcanam*

"Of all types of worship, worship of Lord Vishnu is best. Even better than the worship of Lord Vishnu is the worship of those things which are connected to Him." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.2.214, *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 10.361)

*arcayitva tu govindam tadiyan narcayet tu yah na sa bhagavato jneyah kevalam
dambhikah smrtah*

"One who worships Govinda without worshipping those who are connected to Him cannot be considered a true devotee. In fact, he is nothing more than a hypocrite." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 10.362)

The Lord does not accept the service of one who has no affection for Tulasi and the other things described as *tadiya*, and who simply tries to show affection for Him alone. The devotees are so dear to Lord Govinda that He subordinates Himself to them. He is therefore easily won over by anyone who shows love and respect for them. Indeed, He says that anyone who claims to be a devotee is not truly His devotee. It is only the person who acts as a devotee of His devotees who can make such a claim:

*ye me bhakta-janah partha na me bhaktas ca te janah mad-bhaktanam ca ye
bhaktas te me bhaktatama matah*

"O Arjuna, those who claim to be My devotees are actually not My devotees. I consider only those who are the servants of My devotees to factually be My

devotees." (*Adi Purana*, quoted in *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.2.218, *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 10.133, and *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.11.28)

Uddhava is one of the foremost devotees of the Lord. When Uddhava approached Krishna in order to learn about the discipline of yoga, the Lord delivered the instructions known as the Uddhava-gita, which have been preserved in the eleventh canto of the *Bhagavatam*. Amongst the characteristics of a pure devotee given there', the Lord said,

*adarah paricaryayam sarvangair abhivandanam mad-bhakta-
pujabhyadhika sarva-bhutesu man-matih mad-arthesv anga-cesta ca vacasa
mad-guneranam mayy arpanam ca manasah sarva-kama-vivarjanam*

"My devotees take great care in rendering service to Me, offering obeisances to Me through the use of all their bodily limbs and faculties. They consider the worship of other devotees to be even more important than My worship; they see My presence in all living beings. They engage their bodies in working for Me; they use the power of speech for glorifying My qualities. They offer up the activity of their mind to Me and they give up all material desires." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.19.21-22)

Vrindavan Dasa Thakura confirms the third line of the first verse, *mad-bhakta-pujabhyadhika*, as follows:

amara bhaktera puja ama haite bara sei prabhu vede bhagavate kaila darha

"The Lord has forcefully declared in the Vedas and the *Bhagavatam*:
'Worshiping or serving My devotee is even greater than worshiping Me.' "
(Chaitanya *Bhagavata* 1.1.8)

The Three Levels Of Devotees

Ramananda Basu and his father Satyaraja Khan were exemplary householders from the village of Kulinagrama, amongst Mahaprabhu's dearest followers. Once, they came to see the Lord in Puri and asked Him about a householder devotee's duties. Mahaprabhu answered them in detail, advising all householders everywhere that they have three principal duties: serving the deity form of Krishna, chanting the Holy Names and serving the Vaishnavas.

On hearing this, Satyaraja Khan began to think as follows: "Service to the deity

and chanting the Holy Names are both fairly straightforward and can be easily executed according to the spiritual master's instructions. If one is unable to recognize a Vaishnava, however, the instruction to serve them will not be easily carried out." He thus asked the Lord how to recognize a Vaishnava—who is a real Vaishnava and what are his characteristics?

Over the next three years, Mahaprabhu answered this question by first of all describing the lower category of Vaishnava, the *kanistha*, then the *madhyama* and finally, the highest class of devotee, the *uttama-adhikari*. The first year, he said,

*prabhu kahe janra mukhe suni eka-bara krsna-nama sei pujya srestha
sabakara eka krsna-name kare sarva-papa ksaya nava-vidha bhakti puma nama
haite haya diksa-purascarya-vidhi apeksa na kare jihva-sparsa a-candala
sabare uddhare anusanga-phale kare samsarera ksaya citta akarsiya karaya
krsne premodaya*

"If I hear someone chant Krishna's Holy Name just once, I consider him to be worshipable and the best of all humans. A single repetition of Krishna's holy name destroys all the consequences of a sinful life. All the nine processes of devotional service are completed simply by chanting the Holy Name. With the Holy Name, one does not have to undergo initiation or the *purascarya* observances as with other mantras. The Name delivers even a person in the lowest ranks of human society as soon as one chants it. Secondly, the Holy Name dissolves one's entanglement in material activities; it attracts the mind and awakens one's love for Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.15.106-109)

ataeva janra mukhe eka krsna-nama sei ta vaisnava kariha tanhara sammana

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu then concluded, "Therefore one who chants the name of Krishna should be recognized as a Vaishnava and you should offer all respects to him." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.15.111)

Bhaktivinoda Thakura has provided some clarification of this broad instruction given by Mahaprabhu:

"There are many people who have taken initiation in the Vaishnava mantra but continue to be under the sway of the Mayavada philosophy due to their ignorance of Vaishnava doctrine. A devotee who chants the Holy Name without offenses will not be contaminated by such faults. A person who has simply been

initiated is called a Vaisnavapraya, or 'almost a Vaishnava.' One who has chanted the Holy Name even once without offenses is a pure devotee, even though he may be on the lowest platform. A householder should serve devotees who are at least of this caliber." (*Amṛta-pravaha-bhāṣya*, 2.15.111)

The Characteristics Of The More Advanced Devotees

A year later, the Kulinagrama residents returned to Puri and asked the same questions of the Lord. This time He said:

prabhu kahe vaisnava-seva nama-sankirtana dui kara sikhra pabe sri-kṛṣṇa-carana

"You should both serve the Vaishnavas and chant the holy name of Krishna. If you do these two things, you will quickly attain the shelter of Krishna's lotus feet." {*Chaitanya Charitamṛta* 2.16.70)

Satyaraja Khan once again asked how to recognize a Vaishnava. This time, Mahāprabhu told him about the devotee at the middle stage of progress, the *madhyama adhikari*.

kṛṣṇa-nama nirantara janhara vadane sei vaisnava-sreṣṭha bhaja tanhara carane

"A person who is always chanting the holy name of the Lord is to be considered a first-class Vaishnava. Worship his lotus feet." (*Chaitanya Charitamṛta* 2.16.72)

The third year, again, Satyaraja once again asked the same question and this time, Mahāprabhu responded by describing the characteristics of the most advanced Vaishnava, the *uttama-adhikari*, or *maha-Bhagavata*:

janhara darsane mukhe aise kṛṣṇa-nama tanhare janiha tumi vaisnava-pradhana

"One whose very sight brings the name of Krishna to your lips should be recognized as the best of all Vaishnavas." (*Chaitanya Charitamṛta* 2.16.74)

These three degrees of Vaishnava are also sometimes called progressively *vaisnava*, *vaisnavatara*, and *vaisnavatama*: basic, superior, and superlative types

of devotee. Mahaprabhu thus stressed the householder devotee's duty to respect and serve these three types of Vaishnava. Bhaktivinoda Thakura elaborates by saying, "One has no need of serving a Vaishnava who may have undergone formal initiation but who has never once chanted the Holy Name offenselessly. One should still act as his well-wisher and offer him kindness as a guest, however." (*Amrta-pravaha-bhasya*, 2.16.71)

The Qualities Of A Devotee

There are many descriptions of the qualities of a devotee in the *Bhagavata* and other Vaishnava scriptures.

In fact, the devotee is the reservoir of all virtue. Sri Sukadeva said to Maharaja Pariksit:

*yasvasti bhaktir bhagavaty akincana sarvair gunais tatra samasate surah harav
abhaktasya kuto mahad-guna mano-rathenasati dhavato bahih*

"For those who have devotion for the Supreme Lord without any desire for any personal goal, all the demigods come and invest them with their qualities. As for the non-devotees, where are their virtues? Led by personal desires, they are always superficially running about in the impermanent existence. Therefore it is impossible for them to be truly virtuous." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 5.18.12)

Gadadhara Pundit Gosvami's disciple, Ananta Acarya, was such an infinitely virtuous devotee. His dear disciple was Haridasa Pundit, who directed the service of Govindaji at the Yogapitha in Vrindavan. Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami described the qualities of this Haridasa in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta*:

*sevara adhyaksa sri-pandita haridasa tanra yasah-guna sarva-jagate
prakasa suslla sahisnu santa vadanya gambhira madhura-vacana madhura-
cesta maha-dhira sabara sammana-karta karena sabara hita kautilya-matsarya-
himsa najane tanra cita krsnera ye sadharana sad-guna pancasa se saba gunera
tanra sarire nivasa*

"The chief *pujari* at the Govindaji temple was Haridasa Pundit. His reputation as a virtuous man spread throughout the world. He was polite, tolerant, peaceful, generous, grave, sweet in his words and endeavors, as well as sober. He was respectful to everyone and acted for the welfare of all. His heart was free from duplicity, envy, and malice. The fifty ordinary qualities of Lord Krishna had all

taken residence in his body." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.8.24-27)

Elsewhere, Mahaprabhu Himself gave the following discourse on the subject of the devotee's qualities to Sanatana Gosvami:

*sarva maha-guna-gana vaisnava-sanre krsna-bhakte krsnera guna sakali
sancare sei saba guna haya vaisnava-laksana saba kaha na jay a kari dig-
darasana krpalu akrta-droha satya-sara sama nidosa vadanya mrdu suci
akincana sarvopakaraka santa krsnaika-sarana akama aniha sthira vijita-sad-
guna mita-bhuk apramatta manada amani gambhira karuna maitra kavi daksa
mama*

"All the great virtues manifest in a Vaishnava's body, for it is said that all of Krishna's virtues are transferred to His devotee. These transcendental qualities are the characteristics of pure Vaishnavas, and though they cannot be described fully, I shall try to give some indication of them. Devotees are compassionate; they never deliberately creates enmity; they are truthful in words and deeds and without prejudice; they are blameless, magnanimous, mild, clean, and uninterested in material possessions or ambition. Engaged in welfare work for everyone, they are peaceful; they have taken complete shelter of Krishna and are uninfluenced by lust. They are harmless, steady, and have overcome the six cardinal sins—lust, anger, greed, envy, illusion, and jealousy.

They eat only as much as required, and are not inebriated. Devotees are respectful, and without false prestige; they are grave, compassionate, friendly, poetic, expert, and silent." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.75, 77-80)

The qualities described in the above verses are the symptoms or distinguishing characteristics of the pure, saintly devotee. Of them, the essential characteristic is *krsnaika-sarana*: he has taken complete shelter of Krishna. The other twenty-five qualities are contingent on the first.

Essential And Secondary Virtues

In the *Bhagavatam*, Kapiladeva recounted to his mother Devahuti, the symptomatic virtues of a devotee:

*titiksavah karunikah suhrdah sarva-dehinam ajata-satravah santah sadhavah
sadhu-bhusanah*

"Saintly persons who are tolerant, merciful and friendly to all creatures, who do not make enemies and are peaceful, are jewels amongst the pious."
(*SrimadBhagavatam* 3.25.21)

The qualities listed in this verse are characteristics of the devotee; such qualities are contingent on the essential virtue of being completely surrendered to Krishna. They are known as the *tatastha-laksana*. In the next two verses Kapiladeva goes on to describe the essential characteristics, or *svarupa-laksana*, of the devotee.

*mayy ananyena bhavena bhaktim kurvanti ye araham mat-krte tyakta-
karmanas tyakta-svajana-banahavah*

"With their emotions fixed exclusively in Me, these *sadhus* engage in staunch devotional service to Me. For My sake they have renounced all activities as well as their family relationships and friendships." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.25.22)

*mad-asrayah katha mrstah srnvanti kathayanti ca tapanti vividhas tapa naitan
mad-gata-cetasah*

"Taking shelter of Me, they engage in constantly hearing and chanting about Me. The various kinds of material miseries do not affect them because they are always filled with thoughts of My pastimes and activities." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 3.25.23)

*ta ete sadhavah sadhvi sarva-sanga-vivarjitah sangas tesv atha te
prarthyah sanga-dosa-hara hi te*

"O virtuous lady! *Sadhus* such as these are free from all attachment. You should pray for the association of such saintly persons, for that will counteract the pernicious effects of contact with unholy persons." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.25.24)

In a relationship of increasing affection, as one listens to Krishna *katha* from the mouths of the saintly devotees and the spiritual master, one is enriched by their grace and goes on to free himself from the grips of illusion and attain pure devotion to Krishna.

More Characteristics Of The Devotee

The following verses which give the qualifications of the holy person are found in the *Bhagavata*, wherein the Lord explains to Uddhava the story of King Aila and his attachment to the *Apsara Urvasi*:

*santo'napeksa mac-cittah prasantah sama-darsinah nirmama
nirahankara nirdvandva nisparigraha*

"The holy are desireless and peaceful; they treat everyone equally. They claim nothing as their own; they are without ego. They are unaffected by dualities like hot and cold, and are uninterested in others' possessions. Above all, their minds are always fixed on Me." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.26.27)

*tesu nityam mahabhaga mahabhagesu mat-kathah sambhavanti hi ta
nrnam jusatam prapunanty agham*

"O most fortunate one! Like you, these fortunate saintly persons are constantly engaged in discussing Me. Any person who listens to what they say is purified of his or her sins." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.26.28)

*ta ye srnvanti gayanti hy anumodanti cadrtah mat-parah sraddadhdnas
ca bhaktim vindanti te mayi*

"Those who listen to, sing, or simply appreciate or honor such topics, become devoted to Me and develop faith and devotion to Me." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.26.29)

Factually speaking, just as a boat is the salvation of a person drowning in the sea, so the saintly devotees are the salvation of the poor souls who are sinking in the ocean of material existence. Krishna says,

*annam hi praninam prana artanam saranam tv aham dharmo vittam nrnam
pretya santo'rvag bibhyato'ranam*

"Food is life for all beings; I am the refuge of the distressed; a person's religious acts are the only wealth he can take with him after dying; and the saintly persons are the salvation of anyone who fears material existence." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.26.33)

*santo disanti caksumsi bahir arkah samutthitah devata bandhavah santah santa
atmaham eva ca*

"The saintly bestow inner vision on humanity in the way that the sun lights up the external universe upon rising. They are verily gods, they are the truest friends; they are one's very self, indeed, they are My very self." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.26.34)

Our worshipable spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, has elaborated on this last verse in his *Bhagavata-vivrti*: "The saintly are comparable to the sun. Their words are like the light which gives the power of sight to the conditioned souls inner eye of knowledge, thus destroying the darkness of ignorance into which he has fallen. The truly holy are those who have taken to the path of devotion. Nondevotees can neither be considered saintly nor one's truest friends. Those who see the world either as a source of enjoyment to be exploited or as something fearful which must be rejected, as well as those who have desires other than for the pleasure of the Lord, are all situated at a great distance from Him. Only those fully committed to the path of devotion have the expertise to overcome dualities and distinctions."

The Benefits Of Associating With The Saintly

What are the benefits of associating with the saintly? The compassion of the saintly—the guru and the pure devotees—results principally in the dissipation of one's bad habits and the development of pure *bhakti*.

krsna-bhakti-janma-mula haya sadhu-sanga krsna-prema janme tenho punah mukhya anga

"The root cause of devotional service to Lord Krishna is association with advanced devotees. Even after one's dormant love for Krishna has awakened, association with such devotees remains one's primary devotional activity." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.80)

mahat-krpa vina kona kanne bhakti nay a krsna-bhakti dure rahu, samsara nahe ksaya

"Without the favor of a great devotee, no activity qualifies as devotion. Not only is one unable to attain pure devotion to Krishna, but one cannot even be freed from the bondage of material existence." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.51)

He are numerous verses in the *Bhagavatam* which similarly glorify the association of devotees:

*rahuganaitat tapasa na yati na cejyaya nirvapanad grhad va na cchandasa
naiva jalagni-suryair vina mahat-pada-rajo-bhisekam*

“O Rahugana, one cannot realize the Absolute Truth unless one smears one's entire body with the dust of the lotus feet of great devotees. Such realization cannot come from penances and austerities, performing sacrifice, renunciation of family life, or undergoing severe penances such as keeping oneself submerged in water in winter or surrounding oneself by fire and the scorching heat of the sun in summer.” (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 5.12.12)

*naisam matis tavad urukramanghrim sprsaty anarthapagamo yad-
arthah mahiyasam pada-rajo-bhisekam niskincananam na vrnita yavat*

"Unless they smear upon their bodies the dust of the lotus feet of a Vaishnava who is completely freed from material contamination, persons who are very inclined toward materialistic life can never purify themselves and approach the feet of the glorious Lord." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 7.5.32)

Pious people, or *sadhus* on the karma and *jnana* paths, are not to be defined as *tadiya*, "people or things related to the Lord." Thus, those who are attempting to advance in the discipline of *bhakti* must be especially careful about the type of person to whom they render service. Otherwise, one will not master the discipline and attain its goal—perfection in pure devotion and love for Krishna.

Avoiding Offenses To The Vaishnavas

The *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* quotes the *Agni Purana* about the results of showing disdain to a devotee decorated with the symbols of Vishnu. The verse is spoken by a brahmin lamenting the death of his son by the arrow of Lord Ramacandra's father. King Dasaratha:

*sila-buddhih krta kim va pratimayam harer maya kim maya pathi
drstasya visnu-bhaktasya karhicit tan-mudrankita-dehasya cetasa nadarah
krtah yena karma-vipakena putra-soko mamedrsah*

"Did I once think the deity form of the Lord to be nothing more than a piece of stone? Did I once see a devotee of Vishnu on the road and feel disrespect for him because his body was covered with the Lord's symbols? Is it as a reaction to these sins that I am now lamenting the death of my son?" (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 15.41)

This incident is described in the *Ramayana*. Lord Ramacandra's father King Dasaratha was an archer of great talent who was able to pierce an animal target just by hearing the sound it made, without having to see it. On one occasion, he went to the forest to hunt. In the same forest, a brahmin boy named Sravana had gone to the river to fetch water for his parents, both of whom were blind. While Sravana was drawing water, Dasaratha heard the sound and, thinking that it was an elephant drinking, shot an arrow in that direction. His aim was true and the unfortunate child was mortally wounded. As the boy was in his final throes, he painfully managed to tell Dasaratha about his thirsty parents and asked him to bring them the water that he had been unable to provide.

The King took the waterpot and stood silently in front of Sravana's father and mother. The blind father said, "My child, why has it taken you so long to fetch water today? Why are you saying nothing?" Dasaratha heard the fear and anxiety in the blind brahmin's voice and told him what had happened in great sorrow. "O sage, my name is Dasaratha. I mistook your son for an animal and killed him."

As soon as the blind sage heard the tragic news, he fainted. After some time, when he had regained consciousness, he began to lament his loss. It was at this moment that he began to speculate on possible reasons for his son's death.

The *Padma Purana* also warns against seeing the Vaishnava as an ordinary human being:

"One who thinks the guru is an ordinary man, who disrespects a Vaishnava of the infallible Lord's own entourage, thinking that he belongs to a certain caste or creed, or who thinks of the Lord's or the devotee's *caranamrta*, which purifies all the faults of the Age of Kali, to be ordinary water is taken to be a resident of hell."

It is further written in the *Skanda Purana*,

*nindam kurvanti ye mudha vaisnavanam mahatmanam patanti pitrbhish
sardham maha-raurava-samjnite*

*hanti nindati vai dvesti vaisnavan nabhinandati krudhyate yati no
harsam darsane patanani sat*

"Those fools who criticize the great souls who are devotees of Vishnu fall down into the hell known as Mahaurava along with their ancestors. Six types of

behavior result in falldown: killing a Vaishnava, blaspheming one, feeling inimical toward one, not following the etiquette by standing up to greet one, or getting angry with one. It is even a source of falldown to not take pleasure in seeing a Vaishnava." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 10.311-2)

Furthermore, it is said that even hearing the criticism of Vaishnavas results in falldown.

nindam bhagavatah srnvan tat-parasyajanasya va tato napaiti yah so'pi yaty adhah sukṛta cyutah

"Anyone who upon hearing blasphemy of the Lord or those who have dedicated their lives to Him, does not leave the scene immediately, falls down and loses all the merit he had previously earned." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 10.74.40; *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 10.316)

The Devotee Is The Channel Of The Lord's Mercy

When Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu observed the affection and esteem in which King Prataparudra held his associate Ramananda Raya, He gave an indication of his intention to be merciful to the king by saying,

prabhu kahe tumi kṛṣṇa-bhakata-pradhana tomake je priti kare sei bhagyavan tomate je eta priti ha-ila rajara ei guṇe kṛṣṇa tanre karibe angikara

"My dear Ramananda Raya, you are the foremost of all the devotees of Krishna; therefore whoever loves you is certainly a very fortunate person. Because the King has shown so much love for you, Lord Krishna will certainly accept him." (*Chaitanya Charitamṛta* 2.11.26)

Srila Saccidananda Bhaktivinoda Thakura taught how a devotee should pray for the association of advanced Vaishnavas, how we should fall at their feet and, crying, tell them of our miseries of being burned in the fire of material life as a result of our disinterest in the service of the Lord. The devotees are oceans of mercy and their only distress is to see the suffering of the conditioned souls. When they are aware of our suffering and intercede on our behalf to the Supreme Lord, He will act mercifully towards us, knowing us to be under the care of those in His own entourage. The mercy of the Supreme Lord is received through the medium of His devotees.

The Supreme Lord's potency of compassion manifests in the great Vaishnava or in the body of the spiritual master devotee of Krishna. Because the devotees hold Krishna in their hearts, they can bestow Him on anyone who takes shelter of them without duplicity. There is no alternative method to finding Krishna other than fully accepting the shelter of a devotee who has completely given himself to the Supreme Lord. This is why Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami described Raghunatha dasa's uncle Kalidasa's fervent dedication to the remnants of Vaishnavas' foodstuffs with such approval.

vaisnavera sesa-bhaksanera eteka mahima kalidase paoyaila prabhura krpa-sima tate vaisnavera jhuta khao chari ghrna-laja jaha haite paiba nija vanchita saba kaja krsnera ucchista haya maha-prasada nama bhakta-sesa haile maha-maha-prasadakhyana bhakta-pada-dhuli ara bhakta-pada-jala bhakta-bhukta-avasesa tina maha-bala ei tina-seva haite krsna-prema haya punah punah sarva-sastre phukariya kaya tate bara bara kahi suna hhakta-gana visvasa kariya kara e-tina sevana tina haite krsna-nama-premera ullasa krsnera prasada tate saksi kalidasa

"This is the extent of the glories of the remnants of the devotees' foodstuffs: through dedication to them, Kalidasa was able to attain Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's lotus feet. Therefore, set aside your shame and disgust and eat the Vaishnavas' remnants, for by so doing you will be able to fulfill all your desires. The remnants of Krishna's food are called *maha-prasada*, but the remnants of the devotees are given the name *maha-maha-prasada*. The dust of the devotees' feet, the water that has washed their feet, and the remnants of their food are three very powerful aids to spiritual practice. All revealed scriptures loudly declare again and again that one can attain the supreme goal of ecstatic love for Krishna through the use of these three substances. So, my dear devotees, please listen to me for I insist on this point: keep faith in these three substances and render service to them with complete faith. Through these three substances you will taste the joy of sacred love, which is found in the holy name of Krishna, and you will win Krishna's pleasure. This has been proved by the experience of Kalidasa." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.16.58-63)

Baktivinoda Thakura also sang:

kabe sri-caitanya more karibena daya kabe ami paiba vaisnavera pada-chaya gala-vastra krtanjali vaisnava-nikate dante trna dhari danraiba niskapate kandiya kandiya janaiba dukkha grama samsara anala hate magiba

*visrama suniya amara katha vaisnava thakura ama lagi krsne avedibena
pracura vaisnavera avedane krsna dayamaya mo-hena pamara prati habena
sadaya*

"When will Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu be merciful to me? When will I find shelter in the shade of a Vaishnava's lotus feet? I will approach the saint with a cloth around my neck in humility, my hands folded and with straw between my teeth. In this way I will stand before him and bare my soul to him. Crying, I will tell him of my suffering and beg him to release me from the fire of materialistic life. When he hears my story, the most merciful Vaishnava will intercede on my behalf to the Supreme Lord Krishna. Even though I am most unworthy and insignificant, Krishna will be compassionate towards me when He hears the Vaishnava's prayers on my behalf." (*Kalyana-kalpataru*)

*vaisnava thakura dayara sagara e-dase karuna kari diya pada-chaya sodhaha
amare tomara carana dhari krsna se tomara krsna dite para tomara sakati
ache ami ta kangala krsna krsna bali dhai tava pache pache*

"O venerable Vaishnava, ocean of compassion, be merciful to me, your servant. I beg of you to give me shelter at your feet and purify me. Since Krishna is yours, it is within your power to give Him to others. I am helpless and so, calling out the names of Krishna, I follow you wherever you go." (*Saranagati*)

Without the mercy of the spiritual master one cannot receive the mercy of the Vaishnavas. And without the mercy of both the spiritual master and the Vaishnavas, there is no hope of receiving the Supreme Lord's mercy. The spiritual master gives us the power to recognize the real devotees and separate them from those who simply pretend to be devotees. Without this discrimination it is easy to fall under the thrall of bad association and be misled from the path of pure devotion. No one will be able to point us in the direction of genuine devotional association other than a genuine spiritual master possessing all the qualifications described in scripture: he must be fully conversant in the scriptural truths and enriched by direct realization of the Supreme Truth, on the highest levels of the path of *Bhakti* yoga and free from the pushing and pulling of the material modes. The guidance necessary to achieve perfection is certainly not within the capacity of so-called gurus who have no real knowledge of Vaishnava doctrine, who are indifferent to the path of chanting the Holy Name instituted by Mahaprabhu Himself, who commit offenses to the Holy Name, or who are contaminated by the unholy association of non-devotees or those engaged in

illicit sexual relations.

The blackness of coal cannot be changed by all the water contained in the lakes and oceans of the world; it can only be transformed by fire. In the same way, it is only by the blazing fire of divine instructions from the sad-guru that one can be purified of material contamination. Only then can one be freed from the clutches of the witch of material illusion.

CHAPTER 5 AVOIDING BAD ASSOCIATION

As we have seen from the extensive descriptions above, all auspiciousness comes to one who has the good fortune of encountering and relishing the company of the saintly. By the same token, the completely opposite effect can take place if one has contact with those who are impious or unholy. Therefore, the conduct of a Vaishnava is based primarily on these two principles: the acceptance of saintly company and the rejection of the company of the unholy.

The association of devotees is a positive, direct expression of Vaishnava conduct. Similarly, an indirect or negative expression of Vaishnava conduct is the avoidance of non-devotional association. Much emphasis has been given in the scriptures to this prohibition, and an aspiring devotee should give it special attention.

asat-sanga-tyaga ei vaisnava acara stri-sangi eka asadhu krsnabhakta ara

"The rejection of unholy company is the essence of Vaishnava behavior. The unholy are divided into those who are attached to sex life and those who are against the principles of devotion to Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.87)

The same principle is stated in the *Bhagavatam*:

*tato duhsangam utsrjya satsu sajjeta buddhiman santa evasya chindanti mano-
vyasangam uktibhih*

"An intelligent person should therefore abandon all bad association and stay in the company of devotees. Only such holy persons can cut through our unhealthy mental attachments through the use of their powerful words." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.26.26)

Thus one must be extremely careful in the selection of the company he keeps. In the *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*, while discussing the need to seek out like-minded association, Rupa Gosvami quotes the following verse from *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* (8.51). In this verse, Hiranyakasipu tells Prahlada:

yasya yat-sangatih pumso manivat syat sa tad-gunah sva-kula-rddhyai tato dhman sva-yuthan eva samsrayet

"Like a mirror, a person takes on the qualities of those with whom he comes in contact. One who is intelligent should therefore seek the company of those who have the same ideals in order to develop their good qualities in himself." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.2.229)

The great authorities have thus always warned us to avoid bad company.

Philosophers, Yogis And Fruitive Workers

The *Katyayana-samhita* shows the extent to which a devotee abhors the association of non-devotees:

varam huta-vaha-jvala-panjarantar-vyavasthitih na sauri-cinta-vimukha-jana-samvasa-vaisasam

"Better to be locked in a cage surrounded by burning flames than to suffer in the association of those who dislike thinking of Krishna." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 10.295, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.91)

The point is that if you must suffer great hardship from physical pain or imprisonment, you should accept it rather than place your spiritual life in danger by associating with non-devotees.

The most worshipable Gosvamis have also stated:

madraksih ksina-punyan kvacid api bhagavad-bhakti-hinan manusyan

"Never look upon those men who are bereft of devotion to the Lord and whose merit has thus dwindled to nothingness." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.92)

There are several kinds of non-devotee, but primarily the word *abhakta* refers to (1) the fruitive worker who seeks sense gratification, (2) the philosopher who seeks liberation, and (3) the yogi who seeks mystic powers. Narottama dasa Thakura has summarized the viewpoint of the devotee in his *Prema-bhakti-candrika*:

karmi jnani micha-bhahta na habe taya anurakta suddha-bhajanete kara

mana vraja-janera jei mata tahe habe anugata ei se parama-tattva dhana

"Don't be attached to the fruitive worker, the philosopher, and the hypocritical devotee, but fix your mind in pure *bhajana*. Follow the understanding of the residents of Vraja, for this is the invaluable supreme truth."

*durlabha janama hena nahi bhaja hari kena ki lagiya mara bhava-bandhe chara
anya kriya-karma nahi dekha veda-dharma bhakti kara krsna-pada-dvandve*

"This human life is a rare attainment, so why don't you use it to worship Lord Hari? Why are you just waiting to die in bondage? Put aside all other tasks and forget about the Vedic religion. Just engage in devotion to Krishna's lotus feet."

*karma-kanda jnana-kanda kevala bisera bhanda amrta baliya jeba khaya nana
yoni sada phire kadarya bhaksana kare tara janma adhahpate jaya*

"The sections of the Veda dealing with fruitive activities and spiritual knowledge are reservoirs of poison. Anyone who drinks from them, thinking they contain the nectar of the gods, is doomed to repeated births in various species, where they will eat the unspeakable. Such a person's life is one of degradation."

*jnana karma kare loka nahi jane bhakti-yoga nana mate haiya ajnana tara katha
nahi suni paramartha tattva jani prema-bhakti bhakta-gana-prana*

"People practice philosophical speculation and the fruitive activities of the scriptures, but they do not know the process of *bhakti* for linking with the Supreme Lord. They subscribe to many different philosophical schools, but are fundamentally ignorant of the truth. I do not listen to them when they speak for I know the ultimate truth: the life of the devotee is loving devotion to the Lord."

Two Kinds Of Unholy Persons: The Womanizer And The Impersonalist

The unholy are classed in two fundamental categories: the sensualist or womanizer, and the non-devotee, atheist, or impersonalist. Thus Mahaprabhu said,

*niskincanasya hhagavad-bhajanonmukhasya param param ngamisor bhava-
sagarasya sandarsanam visayinam atha yositam ca ha hanta hanta visa-
bhaksanato'py asadhu*

"Alas, the sight of materialistic persons or women is even more harmful than drinking poison for one who is renounced, inclined towards the worship of the Supreme Lord and desiring to cross over the ocean of material suffering."
(*Chaitanya-candrodayaNataka* 8.23, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.11.8)

Our most worshipable Srila Prabhupada has discussed this principle in general terms in his *Anubhasya*: "The unique principle of conduct for the Vaishnava is the rejection of non-Vaishnava association. The non-Vaishnava refers to two types of persons: one is the licentious person and the other is the non-devotee. The licentious are of two types: legally married individuals who are overly attached to the company of their spouses or those attached to illicit sexual activity. The first of these is legitimate according to the arrangements of the *varnasrama-dharma* system, while the other is engaged in illegitimate sexual activity which is disruptive to the *varnasrama* system, and results in sinful reactions and hellish births. Anyone engaged in sinful activities within the material world is absolutely unworthy of the Vaishnava name. The three goals of human life, *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama*, are all tied up with the non-Vaishnava behavior centered on sexual enjoyment.

"The fourth goal of life, *moksa*, has no basis in sexual enjoyment, but because those seeking liberation are Mayavadis—those who deny a personal conception of God—they are even worse than those addicted to sexual pleasures and are thus considered non-Vaishnavas. They are to be avoided. The company of both the Mayavadi who rejects everything as illusion (including the Supreme Person's name, form and activities) and the *maya-vilasi* who takes pleasure in the illusory world, has a negative effect on one's development of Vaishnava qualities and attainment of pure devotional service. The Mayavadi seeker of liberation rejects material enjoyments in order to enjoy salvation and to make a show of his personal superiority. The womanizer is representative of all hedonists. What they have in common is their self-centered effort to seek the satisfaction of their own senses. Goals other than Krishna dominate their actions. Their lives are full of self-deception and thus they cannot be accepted as servants of Krishna."
(*Anubhasya* to *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.87)

In the third canto of the *Bhagavatam*, Kapiladeva describes in more detail to his mother, Devahuti, the negative effects of associating with the licentious:

*satyam saucam daya maunam buddhir hrih srir yasah ksama samo damo bhagas
ceti yat-sangad yati sanksayam*

*tesv asantesu mudhesu khanditatmasv asadhusu sangam na kuryac
chocyesu yosit-krida-mrgesu ca*

na tathasya bhaven moho bananas canya-prasangatah

yosit-sangad yatha pumso yatha tat-sangi-sangatah

"At all costs, one should avoid association with those lamentable creatures who have become the playthings of the opposite sex. They are lacking in peace, are constantly bewildered, and their concept of self is fragmented. Indeed there is no enchantment more powerful, no bondage for one more sure than that which comes through the association of the opposite sex and through the association of the sensualist. By keeping such company, one loses the qualities of truthfulness, cleanliness, mercy, gravity, intelligence, modesty, beauty, reputation, forgiveness, control of the mind and senses, and good fortune." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 3.31.33-35)

Kapiladeva goes on with his criticism of the sensualist and concludes by saying,

*yopayati sanair maya yosid deva-vinirmitd tarn iksetatmano mrtyum trnaih
kupam ivavrtam*

"Maya, in the form of woman created by the Lord, slowly approaches a man in the guise of offering him service, but he must see her as the death of the soul, as dangerous as a blind well covered with grass." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.31.40)

The Mayavadi

The Supreme Lord Sri Krishna Himself took on the mood of a devotee and appeared in this world as Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu. During His life on this earth, Mahaprabhu set the standard for the conduct of a saintly spiritual master. One thing that is particularly noticeable in Mahaprabhu's teachings is His disapproval of the Mayavada, or monistic philosophy.

When Mahaprabhu was traveling through northern India, He stopped for a few days in Benares. There He heard about the great Mayavadi *sannyasi* Prakasananda Sarasvati from a Maharashtrian brahmin. The Lord made the following comments:

prabhu kahe mayavadi krsne aparadhi brahma atma caitanya kahe

*niravadhi ataeva tara mukhe na aise krsna-nama krsna-nama krsna-svarupa
duita samana nama vighraha svarupa tina eka-rupa tine bheda nahi tina cid-
ananda-rupa deha-dehira, nama-namira krsne nahi bheda jivera dharma nama-
deha-svarupe vibheda*

"Mayavadi impersonahsts are offenders to Krishna. They constantly repeat words like Brahman, atman, and caitanya. As a result, they are unable to utter Krishna's holy name. Krishna's name and His essence are the same. Krishna's name, His form and His essential being are all one. They are spiritual and there is no distinction to be made between them. In Krishna, there is no difference between body and soul, nor between the signified and signifier as is the case with thejiva, in whom all these distinctions are present." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.17.129-132)

Other verses in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta* confirm that because the Mayavadis are inimical to the concept of eternal service to Krishna, they are incapable of chanting the pure name of the Lord.

ataeva krsna-nama na aise tara mukhe mayavadi-gana jate maha bahir-mukhe

"The holy name of Krishna does not come from the mouths of the Mayavadis, for they are completely opposed to the Lord." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.17.143)

Mahaprabhu appeared in five forms as the *Panca-tattva*, in order to inundate the world with love of God. Only the Mayavadi philosophers were able to somehow escape and avoid being affected.

*mayavadi karma-nistha kutarkika-gana nindaka pasandi jata paruwa
adhama sei saba mahadaksa dhana palaila sei vanya ta-sabare chunite narila*

"The Mayavadis, fruitive workers, the argumentative, blasphemers, atheists, and inferior students were very expert in avoiding the flood of prema. They ran away and so it could not touch them." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.29-30)

The Danger Of Hearing Mayavada Commentaries

The Vedanta Sutras were written by Vyasadeva in order to explain the philosophy of pure devotional service, but in the Mayavadi interpretation of the sutras, the Lord's eternal transcendental form is denied. Furthermore, this interpretation eliminates the eternal distinction between the individual and the

supreme souls, effectively negating the existence of an eternal relationship of service between the infinitesimal individual soul and the Supreme Lord. Service to the Lord is in fact the eternal constitutional activity of the soul, so anyone who hears the Mayavada philosophy compromises his true self-understanding. Losing the sense of devotion to the Lord, he becomes lost to himself and, in effect, ruined. Therefore, it is said,

jivera nistara lagi sutra kaila vyasa mayavadi-bhasya sunile haya sarva-nasa

"Vyasadeva wrote the Vedanta Sutras for the salvation of the living entities, but if they hear the interpretation of the Mayavadis, they will go to ruin." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.6.169)

Svarupa Damodara Gosvami's good friend, Bhagavan Acarya, had a younger brother, Gopala Bhattacharya, who had studied Vedanta in Benares. When Gopala came to visit him in Puri, Bhagavan Acarya repeatedly asked Svarupa Damodara to hear his brother explain the Vedanta Sutras. Svarupa Damodara was not eager to do so and explained his objections by saying:

*buddhi-bhrasta haila tomara gopalera sange mayavada sunibare upajila
range vaisnava hana jeba sariraka-bhasya sune sevyasevaka-bhava chari
apandre isvara mane maha-bhagavata jei krsna prana-dhana jara mayavada-
sravane citta avasya phire tanra*

"You have lost your intelligence by keeping Gopala's company, so now you have developed a fancy to hear Mayavada philosophy. When a Vaishnava listens to Sankara's *Sanraka-bhasya* (the Mayavada commentary upon *Vedanta Sutra*), he gives up making a distinction between master and servant and considers himself the Supreme Lord. Hearing the Mayavada philosophy will unfailingly change the consciousness of even a *maha-bhagavata* devotee whose life and soul is Krishna."

In spite of Svarupa Damodara's protest, Bhagavan Acarya continued to defend his desire. He said, "We have given our life and soul to Krishna's lotus feet. Sankara's commentary will not be able to change our minds."

*svarupa kahe tathapi mayavada sravane cit brahma maya mithya ei matra
sune jiva jnana-kalpita isvare sakala-i ajnana yahara sravane bhaktera phate
mana-prana*

Svarupa Damodara replied, "Even so, in the Mayavada philosophy, we only hear about how Brahman is pure consciousness and that the universe of *maya* is false. We also hear that the independent consciousness of the individual *jiva* is just imagination and that all is ignorance, even in the Supreme Lord. When a devotee hears such things, his heart bursts with pain."

Bhagavan Acarya felt greatly ashamed and fearful. He said nothing, but the next day, he asked Gopala Bhattacharya to return home to Bengal. (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.2.94-100)

The Lord's Form And Potencies Are Eternal

Vrindavan dasa Thakura also writes in the *Chaitanya Bhagavata* that Mahaprabhu made the following criticism of the Mayavada philosophy to Murari Gupta:

*hasta-pada-mukha mora nahika locana ei mata vede more kare
vidambana kasite paraya beta prakasananda set beta mora anga kare khanda
khanda bakhanaye veda mora vigraha na mane sarva anga haila kustha tabu
nahi jane sarva-yajna-maya mora je anga pavitra aja-bhava-adi gaya jahara
caritra punya pavitrata paya je anga parase taha mithya bale beta kemana
sahase sunaha murari gupta kahi mata sara veda guhya kahi ei tomara
gocara ami yajna-varaha sakala veda-sara ami se karinu purve prthivi
uddhara sankirtana arambhe mohara avatara bhakta jana lagi dusta karimu
samhara sevakera droha muni sahite na paron putra jadi haya mora tathapi
samharon*

"The Vedic scriptures describe Me as being without hands or feet, with no face or eyes. In this way they make a mockery of Me. In Kasi, there is a fool named Prakasananda who is teaching this doctrine. He too cuts My body into little pieces. He teaches the Vedic scriptures, but he does not accept the truth of My eternal form. As a result of his offences, his body has been covered with leprosy, but still he refuses to understand. My body is eternally pure and the embodiment of all the Vedic sacrifices; Brahma and Shiva glorify My activities. Whoever touches My body gains spiritual merit and becomes purified of sin, but this insolent fool thinks that it is illusory. Listen, Murari, and I will tell you the confidential essence of the Vedic teaching. I am the incarnation Yajna-varaha, the cream of the Vedic literature who previously lifted up the world. Now I have come in this form to preach the *sankirtana* movement. For the sake of the

devotees, I will destroy the wicked. I am unable to tolerate those who act as the enemies of My devotees; even if He is My own son, I will destroy him.
(*Chaitanya Bhagavata* 2.3.36-44)

The Vedic scriptures have used words like *nirakara* ("formless") and *nirvisesa* ("undifferentiated, without attributes") in order to negate the presence of material form, activities, and attributes in the Supreme Lord. But in turn, they go on to reveal the truth of the Lord's eternal form and attributes. His appearance and pastimes in this world. In fact, because the Lord is omnipotent, no one can deny His eternal form. The same scriptures that negate the form and qualities of the Supreme on the one hand go on to later approve the Lord's form and attributes. Therefore, if one examines the scriptures in detail he will become convinced that the doctrine of the Lord's transcendental form and attributes takes precedence.

*isvarera sri-vigraha sac-cid-anandakara se-vigrahe kaha sattva-gunera
vikara sri-vigraha je na mane sei ta pasandi adrsya asprsyas sei haya yama-
dandi*

"The transcendental form of the Supreme Lord is complete in eternity, cognizance and bliss. You, however, say that this form is a product of the material quality of goodness. Whoever denies the Lord's transcendental form is certainly an atheist. One should neither see nor touch such a person who will be punished by the lord of death." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.6.166-167)

*sarvaisvarya-paripuma svayam bhagavan tanre nirakara kari karaha
vyakhyana nirvisesa tanre kahe yei sruti-gana prakrta nisedhi hare aprakrta
sthapana*

"The Supreme Lord Himself is complete in all divine majesty, but you describe him as formless. Those scriptures which say that He is impersonal are simply condemning a material understanding of His form and attributes and go on to say that His form and attributes are transcendental and free of mundane characteristics." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.6.140-141)

Krishnadasa Kaviraja quotes a verse from the *Hayasirsa-pancaratra* which substantially says the same thing:

*ya ya srutir jalpati nirvisesam sa sabhidhatte sa-visesam eva vicara-yoge sati
hanta tasam prayo ballyah sa-visesam eva*

"Those Upanishads which describe the Absolute Truth as formless and impersonal go on to prove in the end that He is a person. Upon close analysis, it can be seen that though both the personal and impersonal descriptions of the Supreme are valid, the personal conception ultimately predominates in these scriptures." (*Chaitanya-candrodaya-nataka*, 6.67)

The *Taittiriya Upanishad*(3.1) uses the ablative, instrumental and locative cases to indicate three kinds of attributes present in the Supreme Person.

yato va imani bhutani jay ante yena jatani jivanti yat prayanty abhisamvisanti tad brahma tad vijijnasasva

"Brahman is that from which all these living entities are born, by Brahman they live, and after death, they enter into Brahman. That is what you must know." (*Taittiriya Upanishad*3.1)

The words *bahu syam* ("I become many") which are found in both the *Chandogya Upanishad* (6.2.3) and the *Taittiriya Upanishads* indicate that the Supreme Lord had the desire to expand His energies in creation. The words *sa aiksata* ("He glanced over creation") found in the *Aitareya Upanishad* indicate that the Supreme Lord had a desire to create and that He extended His powers over the material nature. As such, His existence prior to creation is clearly being emphasized.

The word *brahman* is repeatedly mentioned throughout the Upanishads. The *SrimadBhagavatam* is said to be the essence of the Vedanta (*sarva-vedanta-saram hi—Srimad Bhagavatam* 12.13.12). There, Krishna is named as the complete manifestation of Brahman:

aho bhagyam aho bhagyam nanda-gopa-vrajaukasam yan-mitram paramanandam pumam brahma sanatanam

"How fortunate! How fortunate are the residents of Nanda's cowherd community! They have made the eternal, supreme and complete form of bliss, the complete Brahman, their friend and relative." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 10.14.32)

A number of verses in the Upanishads state that the Supreme Truth has no material hands or feet; in the next breath, however, they affirm that He moves everywhere. Here is an example of such a verse from the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*:

apani-pado javano grahita pasyaty acaksuh sa smoty akamah sa vetti vedyam na ca tasyasti vetta tam ahur agryam purusam mahantam

"He has no hands and no feet, yet He runs and takes hold of all things. Though He has no eyes. He sees. He has no ears, but He hears. He knows everything that is to be known, but no one knows Him. He is called the original great person."
(*Svetasvatara Upanishad 3.19*)

The Mayavadis reject the direct meaning of such *Sruti* texts and establish that the Supreme Truth is impersonal on the basis of an indirect interpretation. This does not change the actual personal meaning of these texts. The factual understanding of Brahman is the Supreme Lord Bhagavan, full of six opulences and possessing a form of spiritual bliss. Scriptures which say that He is formless are simply stating that He has no material form. The Mayavadis further say that He is inactive even though He is always engaged in delightful, transcendental pastimes.

na tasya karyam karanam ca vidyate na tat-samas cabhyadhikam ca drsyate parasya saktir vividhaiva srusyate svabhaviki jnana-bala-kriya ca

"He has neither activities nor senses. No one is equal or superior to Him can be found. He possesses a natural superior energy which manifests variously as knowledge, strength and action." (*Svetasvatara Upanishad 6.8*)

The purport of this verse is that the Supreme Lord has no material activities. This is because He has no material form consisting of hands, feet or other working senses. Despite not having material senses, He is engaged in the work of His divine diversions. Though situated in His divine abode beyond all material anxiety, He is all-pervading. No one is the Lord's equal, what to speak of being superior to him. He is *asamordhva*. The Supreme Lord's transcendental potencies are natural to Him. These natural potencies are of three kinds: *jnana-sakti*, or the power of knowledge; *bala-sakti*, or the power of strength; and *kriya-sakti*, the power of action. These potencies are para or primary. These energies are also known by the following names: (1) *cit-sakti*, or *samvit-sakti*, (2) *sat-sakti*, or *sandhim-sakti*, and (3) *ananda-sakti*, or *hladini-sakti*.

The Mayavadis, however, take a lot of trouble to prove that Krishna has no potencies even though this verse clearly states that He naturally possesses them intrinsically. The Supreme Lord's energies are further subdivided into three: His

internal or spiritual potency, His external potency of *maya*, and the marginal energy consisting of the living entities.

The essence of the combined ecstatic and conscious elements of the spiritual potency is *bhakti*. When this is given to the living entity and he wholeheartedly adopts it, he can break free of the coverings of the material or external energy and enter into the divine ecstatic consciousness of pure love for Krishna. This great achievement is the consequence of association with pure devotees: he then becomes fixed in the conduct standardized by such saintly persons.

Thakura Bhaktivinoda's Prayer

The eternally liberated associate of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Sri Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has written the following song in his *Saranagati*:

*visaya-vimudha ara mayavadi jana bhakti-sunya dunhe prana dhare akarana ei
dui sanga natha na hay a amara prarthana kariye ami carane tomara se duwera
madhye visayi tabe bhala mayavadi-sanga nahi magi kona kala visayi-hrdaya
jabe sadhu-sanga paya anayase labhe bhakti bhaktera krpaya mayavada
dosajara hrdaya pasila kutarke hrdaya tara vajra-sama bhela bhaktira svarupa
ara visaya asraya mayavadi anitya boliya saba kaya dhik tara krsna-seva
sravana-kirtana krsna ange vajra hane tahara stavana mayavada sama bhakti
pratikula nai ataeva mayavada sanga nahi cai bhaktivinoda mayavada dura
kari vaisnava-sangete baise namasraya dhari*

"Both those who are bewildered by the promise of sense enjoyment and Mayavadi impersonalists are devoid of devotion. Their lives have no purpose. I pray, O Lord, that I never be subjected to their association. Of the two, however, I would rather be with a sensualist than with a Mayavadi, to whose company I hope I will never be subjected. A sensualist may be transformed by the association of a devotee whose mercy can easily turn him to a life of devotion. On the other hand, once the impersonalist contamination has touched someone's heart, it becomes as hard as stone with all manner of false argument. The Mayavadi considers devotion itself, the devotee and the object of devotion all to be temporary manifestations of the material world. I curse his so-called service to Krishna, his hearing of the *Bhagavatam* and chanting of the Holy Names. His prayers to Krishna are like thunderbolts on the Lord's body. There is nothing more harmful to devotion than Mayavada, therefore I do not wish to ever be with people who subscribe to that philosophy. *Bhaktivinoda* hereby rejects the

Mayavada philosophy and takes shelter of the Holy Names in the association of devotees." (*Saranagati*, 27)

Remain Always In The Association Of Devotees

The result of bad association is that one does not get free of material desire. When one's mind is overcome with the elation and disappointment resulting from attachment to the sense objects, how can something as pure as Krishna prema find a place there? Or, as Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami writes:

bhukti-mukti-adi vancha jadi mane haya sadhana karile prema utpanna na haya

"If desires for sense enjoyment and liberation find a place in a devotee's heart, all his practice of devotional activities will not result in love for Krishna."
(*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.19.175)

Amongst the various practices of devotional service, the chanting of the Holy Names has pride of place. Those who have other desires and are trapped in the company of nondevotees, however, may chant for thousands of lifetimes without ever attaining the goal of love for Krishna. Therefore, Jagadananda Pundit wrote,

asadhu-sangete bhai nama nahi haya namaksara bahiraya bate nama kabhu naya kabhu namabhasa sada haya nama aparadha e saba janibe bhai krsna-bhaktir badha jadi karibe krsna-nama sadhu-sanga kara bhukti-mukti-siddhi-vancha dure parihara

"O brother! You cannot chant the Holy Name in the association of non-devotees. The sounds of the Holy Name may come out of your mouth, but it will not really be the Name. It will sometimes be the Name's reflection (*namabhasa*) and sometimes offensive chanting (*namaparadha*), but brother, you should know that in either case, this kind of chanting interferes with the attainment of pure devotion to Krishna. If you want to chant the Holy Names, then associate with devotees and keep desires for sense enjoyment, liberation, and yogic powers at a distance." (*Prema-vivarta*, 7)

dasa-aparadha tyaja mana-apamana anasaktye visaya bhunja ara laha krsna-nama krsna-bhaktira anukula saba karaha svikara krsna-bhaktira pratikula saba kara parihara jnana-yoga-cesta chara ara karma-sanga markata-vairagya tyaja jate deha-ranga krsna amara pale rakhe jana sarva-kala atma-nivedana dainye ghucio janjala sadhu paowa kasta bara jivera janiya sadhu-bhakta rupe

*krsna aila nadiya gorapada asraya karaha buddhiman gord bai sadhu-guru
ache keba ana*

"Give up the ten offenses to the Holy Name as well as worrying about receiving respect or criticism. Consume what you need without attachment and always chant the Holy Name. Accept everything which favors devotion to Krishna and reject everything which interferes with its practice. Abandon any efforts for liberation or mystic power as well as devotion mixed with karma. Above all, give up the false renunciation of the monkeys, in which bodily consciousness and attachment to sense gratification dwell. Remain strong in the knowledge that Krishna is always taking care of you. Offer yourself to Krishna completely and, in humility, become free from all entanglements. It is very difficult for an ordinary person to find the association of genuine saintly persons. Krishna Himself knows this and so He kindly came to Nadiya in the form of a saintly devotee. An intelligent person takes shelter of Mahaprabhu's lotus feet, for such a person knows that other than Mahaprabhu, there is no true saint or spiritual master."

The only way to be free of bad association is thus by replacing it with the good:

*sadhu sanga krpa kim va krsnera krpaya kamadi-duhsanga chari suddha-bhakti
paya*

"Either through the benediction of devotional association or through the mercy of Krishna Himself, one becomes free of the bad association resulting from lust, anger, and greed, and attains pure devotional service." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.24.97)

*sat-sangan mukta-duhsango hatum notsahate budhah kirtyamanam yaso
yasya sakrd akamya rocanam*

"Once freed from bad association by keeping the company of the saintly, an intelligent person becomes reluctant to give up listening to the glories of the Lord, which are so pleasing, even if only heard once." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.10.11)

Thus the *Bhagavatam* advises:

*tato duhsangam utsrjya satsu sajjeta buddhiman santa evasya chindanti mano-
vyasangam uktibhih*

"An intelligent person should therefore abandon all bad association and hold fast to the company of devotees. Such saints are the only ones who, through their instructions, can cut through our unhealthy mental attachments." (*Srimad Bhagavatam 11.26.26*)

One has to be attentive in avoiding the association of opposite sex and non-devotees. But if one remains in good company, the dangers of the world disappear. Thus, Narottama dasa sings in his *Prema-bhakti-candrika*: "What can lust, anger and greed do to the practitioner who has the association of saintly persons?"

CHAPTER 6 TAKING SHELTER OF KRISHNA

Out of compassion for the living beings, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in the holy city of Nabadwip in the land of Gauda, or Bengal. Accompanied by His associates. He came to distribute the very rare ecstatic love of God as experienced by the residents of Vraja. In order to do so He first taught the process of surrender, for it is only through taking shelter of Krishna, also known as *Saranagati*, that one can attain this ecstatic love. The Supreme Lord makes the devotee who has taken shelter of Him the inheritor of this treasure of love.

In his hymns to the Supreme Lord, the elephant Gajendra sang the following stanza:

*ekantino yasya na kancanartham vanchanti ye vai bhagavat-prapannah aty-
adbhutam tac-caritam sumangalam gayanta ananda-samudra-magnah*

"Unalloyed devotees, who have fully surrendered to the Lord, have no desire for anything other than to serve Him. Merged into an ocean of transcendental bliss, they are always singing the glories of His most wonderful personality and activities." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 8.3.20)

The devotees who have surrendered to the Lord are fully self-satisfied by the great wealth which comes to them through this surrender. The happiness they feel is higher than the joy felt by any other person. Their hearts are never disturbed by any sense of insufficiency.

When we are deficient in this process of self-surrender, we turn to sense enjoyment, liberation, or mystic success for satisfaction. In search of such temporary appeasements, we end up wandering from place to place, from birth to birth, simply accumulating calamity and misfortune.

The Six Aspects Of Saranagati

The first song in Bhaktivinoda Thakura's Saranagati is the following:

sri krsna caitanya prabhu jive day a kari sva-parsada sviya dhama saha

*avatari atyanta durlabha prema karibare dana sikhaya saranagati bhakatera
prana dainya, atma-nivedana, goptrtve varana avasya rakstbe krsna visvasa
palana bhakti-anukula matra karyera svikara bhakti-pratikula-bhava
varjanangikara sad-anga saranagati haibe janhara tanhara prarthana sune sri-
nanda-kumara rupa sanatana pade dante tma kari bhaktivinoda pare dui pada
dhari kanaiya kanaiya bale ami ta adhama sikhaye saranagati karahe uttama*

"Out of compassion for the fallen *jivas*, Sri Krishna Chaitanya appeared in this world with all of His eternal associates and His eternal abode. Wishing to bestow on them that most rare gift of love for Himself, He taught *saranagati*, the process that is the life of the devotees — taking shelter of the Lord. Humility; self-surrender; accepting Krishna as your protector; belief that Krishna will save you in all circumstances; undertaking only activities conducive to developing love for Krishna, and rejecting everything which is detrimental to that end: these are the six elements of taking shelter. Krishna, the son of Nanda, listens to the prayers of anyone who takes shelter of him in this way. I fall down at the feet of Rupa and Sanatana and take hold of them in all humility. Crying, I call out, saying, 'I am most fallen. Please teach me how to take shelter of Krishna so that I can perfect my human life.'"

Bhaktivinoda Thakura's song is based on a verse from the Vaisnava-tantra, which Jiva Gosvami quotes in his *Bhakti-sandarbha* (236). The six elements of taking shelter are described there as follows:

*anukulyasya sankalpah pratikulyasya varjanam raksisyatiti visvaso goptrtve
varanam tatha atma-niksepa-karpanye sad-vidha saranagatih*

"Accepting that which is favorable, rejecting the unfavorable, believing that Krishna will save me, accepting Krishna as one's maintainer, self-surrender and humility are the six types of *saranagati* ." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.97)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has elaborated on these processes in his *Amrta-pravaha-bhasya*: "(1) 'Accepting that which is favorable' means that which is favorable to developing one's devotion to Krishna. (2) 'Rejecting the unfavorable' means one must vow, 'I renounce any activity which does not lead to Krishna.' (3) 'Believing that Krishna will save me' means believing that Krishna alone is my savior. In other words, one should think, 'I do not believe knowledge of Brahman will save me from death, but Krishna will definitely be merciful and deliver me.' (4) 'Accepting Krishna as one's maintainer' means one

thinks: 'I do not believe that the deities presiding over the different sacrifices or religious performances deliver the results of these acts, nor do they maintain me. It is rather Krishna alone who takes care of me and not any other man or god.' (5) 'Self-surrender' means to think, 'My wishes are not independent. I am completely subordinate to the will of Krishna.' (6) 'Humility' means to think of oneself as very lowly."

The Supreme Lord loves those devotees who have taken shelter of Him. He listens to their prayers and awards them the gift of *vraja-prema*.

Taking Shelter In Body, Mind, And Words

The following verse from the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* (11.677) further elaborated on the sixfold process of taking shelter in body, mind, and words. Jiva Gosvami also quotes this verse in *Bhakti-sandarbha*:

tavasmiti vadan vaca tathaiva manasa vidan tat-sthanam asritas tanva modate saranagatah

"With one's body, one who has taken shelter of the Lord resides in the holy place where Krishna performed His pastimes. With his words, he says, "O Lord, I am Yours," while with the mind, devotees know himself to belong to the Lord. In this way, he enjoys spiritual bliss." (Also quoted in *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.98)

The devotee who takes shelter by completely surrendering to Krishna is considered by the Lord to be equal to Himself, that is, most dear.

sarana lana kare krsne atma-samarpana

"As soon as a devotee has taken shelter of Krishna and surrendered to Him, Krishna makes him equal to Himself." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.99)

This is corroborated by a statement made by Krishna Himself to His dear associate and disciple, Uddhava:

martyo yada tyakta-samasta-karma niveditatma vicikirsito me tadamrtatvam pratipadyamano mayatma-bhuyaya ca kalpate vai

"When the living entity who is subjected to birth and death gives up all his

works and completely surrenders himself to Me, engaging in activities according to My desire, then he attains immortality by My grace, becoming equal to Myself in spiritual quality and thus able to enjoy the divine rapture of life in the spiritual world in My association." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 11.29.32, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.4.193)

Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura has elaborated on this verse as follows: "The knowledge of the living entity who is subject to death is limited to that which is perceived by the senses. When he gives up fruitive activities and mental speculation to simply surrender himself to the Lord, then he no longer knows any insufficiency because he attains the Lord. Due to serving the Lord of Vaikuntha, he himself takes on the qualities of Vaikuntha. This means that the *kuntha* nature, that is, the illusory material nature, no longer has any hold over him."

In the above verse, the words *atma-bhuyaya kalpate* can also be interpreted to mean that such a person obtains opulences equal to those of the Lord Himself. But however one interprets these words, they should never be taken to mean oneness in the monistic sense. The devotee who has taken refuge in the Lord is so dear to Him that He considers Him to be as close as His own body.

Every time a devotee pays his obeisances to the Lord, he engages in an act of self-surrender. The Sanskrit word *namah*, which appears in *namaskara* and in many *mantras*, has been explained in the *Padma Purana, Uttara-khanda*.

*ahankrtir makarah syan nakaras tan-nisedhakah tasmad tu namasa ksetri-
svatantryam pratisidhyate*

*bhagavat-paratanthro'sau tadayattatma-jivanah tasmad sva-samarthy-
vidhim tyajet sarvam asesatah*

*isvarasya tu samarthyat nalabhyam tasya vidyate tasmin nyasta-bharah sete tat-
karmaiva samacaret*

"False ego is represented by the syllable *ma*; the word *na* negates it. The word 'namah' therefore indicates that the embodied being has no independent existence. He is always dependent on the Supreme Lord and his life is in every way confined within Him. He therefore should completely give up any illusion he has of his own independent capacity to do anything. Through the Lord's power, there is nothing that he cannot achieve. Knowing this, he surrenders

responsibility for his own existence to the Lord and simply engages in His service." {*Bhakti-sandarbha* 236)

The Lord Is The Only Refuge

When Devaki saw that Krishna had taken birth as her own son, she glorified Him as follows:

*martyo mrtyu-vyala-bhitah palayan lokan sarvan nirbhayam
nadyagacchat tvat-padabjam prapya yadrcchayadya susthah sete mrtyur
asmad apaiti*

"We living beings are subject to death and are thus constantly afraid of being swallowed up by the great serpent of death. We flee wherever we can within this world, but nowhere can we find freedom from danger. O Lord, through some great fortune we have come to Your lotus feet. Now we can finally rest in peace and happiness, for Death himself flees in fear of You." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 10.3.27)

In fact, there is no reliable refuge anywhere in the universe for the living beings other than the lotus feet of the Lord, for they are fearless, free from all lamentation, and full of the nectar of immortality. The Lord Himself repeatedly states that He delivers His devotees from all distress when they take shelter of Him. He alone is the *jiva's* protector and maintainer. Thus the Lord's following utterance, taken from the *Brahma Purana*:

*tvam prapanno'smi saranam deva-devam janardanam iti yah saranam
praptas tam klesad uddharamy aham*

"I deliver anyone who takes refuge in Me with these words: 'O Lord of lords, O Janardana! I surrender to You, my only shelter.'" (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 11.654, *Bhakti-sandarbha* 236)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has written many songs demonstrating the principles of taking shelter, not only in his collection titled *Saranagati*, but also in *Kalyana-kalpa-taru*, *Gitavali*, and *Gita-mala*. These and the songs of Narottama dasa recorded in *Prarthana* and *Prema-bhakti-candrika* should be memorized by the devotees. Anyone who enters into the spirit of these songs will make quick progress on the path of *bhakti*.

"I Have Surrendered Myself To Your Lotus Feet"

atma-nivedana tuwa pade kari hainu parama sukhi duhkha dure gela cinta na rahila caudike ananda dekhi asoka abhaya amrta adhara tomara carana-dvaya tahate ekhana visrama labhiya chdrinu bhavera bhaya

"I have surrendered myself to Your lotus feet and have become supremely joyful.

All my miseries have left me and I have no more worries.

All I see is joy in every direction.

Your lotus feet are free from lamentation, and there is no fear, no death; they are the reservoir of ambrosia.

Now that I have found repose there,

I have no more fear of material existence."

(Saranagati, 16)

I Have Finally Understood, O Lord

ekhana bujhinu prabho tomara corona asoha-abhayamrta purna sarva-ksana sakala chariya tuwa carana-kamale pariyachi ami natha tava pada-tale tava pada padma natha raksibe amare ara raksa-karta nahi e bhava-samsare ami tava nitya-dasa janinu e-bara amara palana-bhara ekhana tomara bara duhkha paiyachi svatantra jivane saba duhkha dure gela o pada varane

"I have finally understood, O Lord, that Your feet are full of the ambrosia of immortality, joy, and fearlessness. I have now given up everything to fall down and take shelter of Your lotus feet, my Lord. Your lotus feet, O Lord, will protect me. Nothing else in this world can give me the same protection. Now I know myself to be Your eternal servant, so the responsibility for my maintenance is Yours. My life of so-called independence gave me so much misery, but now that I have taken shelter of Your feet, all these miseries have disappeared." *(Saranagati , 21)*

"I Am Your Dog And You Are My Master"

sarvasva tomara carana sampiya parechi tomara ghare tumi ta thakura tomara kukura baliya janaha more

banahiya nikate amare palibe rahiba tomara dvare pratipa janere asite na diba rakhiba gar-era pare

tava nija-jana prasada seviya uchista rakhibejaha amara bhojana parama anande prati dine habe taha

basiya suiya tomara carana cintiba satata ami nacite nacite nikate jaiba jakhana dakibe tumi

nijere posana kabhu na bhaviba rahiba bhavera bhare bhaktivinoda tomare palaka baliya varana kare

"I have surrendered everything to Your lotus feet and have thrown myself down at Your door. I ask You to recognize that I am Your dog and you are my master.

"You will tie me up nearby and take care of me. I will remain near your doorway and chase away thieves and other dangerous people, keeping them on the other side of the moat.

"Every day, I will joyfully eat only the leftovers of the devotees who have eaten Your *prasada*.

"Whether sitting or lying down, I will only think of Your lotus feet. Whenever You call, I will go dancing toward You.

"I will never think of my own needs or maintenance, but will remain blissfully in the joy of my feelings for You. Bhaktivinoda officially accepts you as his protector." (*Saranagati*, 19)

Anyone who wishes to make progress on this path should study the subject of *Saranagati*. One who has not taken shelter of Krishna, but takes up the *raga-marga* only out of a desire for profit, adoration and prestige is a shameless pretender. It is not long before he is attacked by all kinds of *anarthas*. It is true that the path of *vidhi-bhakti* cannot give *vraja-prema*, but we must follow the path shown by the spiritual masters in the disciplic succession. They have made

it abundantly clear that it is through devotion to the chanting of the Holy Name that our capacity to practice *raganuga-bhakti* is developed. The process of chanting the Holy Name is like the ceremony which gives life to the deity form of the Lord. The life of the devotee is the process of taking shelter. This life is bestowed on the devotee by the Holy Name.

CHAPTER 7 THE GURU AND INITIATION

From the previous chapters, it is clear that it is of paramount importance to come into contact with the Vaishnavas and, in particular, with a pure devotee spiritual master who can instruct one on the path of spiritual life.

We have also seen that one must have accumulated many lifetimes of pious acts before he can get the good fortune of associating with a pure devotee. When Vidura's doubts had been erased by listening to Maitreya Muni's explanations of the Supreme Lord, he said in gratitude:

*durapa hy alpa-tapasah seva vaikuntha-vartmasu yatropagiyate nityam deva-
devo janardanah*

"Someone who has made few sacrifices and accumulated little merit can never win service to the great souls travelling the path to the Lord's abode of Vaikuntha. The travellers on that path are constantly engaged in glorifying Him who is the God of gods and controller of all living entities." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 3.7.20)

Without such merit, one cannot have faith in the manifestation of the guru, nor can one even recognize him.

*maha-prasade govinde nama-brahmani vaisnave svalpa-punyavatam
rajan visvaso naiva jay ate*

"Those who have little merit, O king, never develop faith in the Lord's mahaprasada, Govinda Himself, the Holy Name (*nama-brahma*), and the Vaishnavas." (*SkandaPurana*)

Jiva Gosvami confirms this, at the beginning of his *Bhakti-sandarbha*, with a quote from the Brahma-vaivarta Purana:

*yavat papais tu malinam hrdayam tavad eva hi na sastre satya-buddhih syat sad-
buddhih sad-gurau tatha*

"As long as our hearts are contaminated by sin, we will not see the truth given in the scriptures. In other words, we will not develop faith in the theistic conclusions of the scripture, nor will we recognize the divine authority of the spiritual master, we will take gifts to a misleader, a guru whose instructions will lead us along the road that takes us away from Goloka-Vaikuntha, and surrender to him."

Surrendering To The Guru

Krishna states in the *Bhagavad-gita*:

tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya upadeksyanti te jnanam jnaninas tattva-darsinah

"Learn the truth through surrender, submissive inquiry, and service. The self-realised soul, who has seen the truth, will enlighten you." (*Gita* 4.34)

In the Mundaka Upanishad, there is a famous verse which states the importance of surrendering to a spiritual master.

tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet samit-panih srotriyam brahmanistham

"In order to realize the truth, one should take gifts in hand and approach a spiritual master who is learned and fixed in Brahman."

The word *samidh* ("gifts") used here literally means wood for the sacrificial fire, but it is taken to have an extended meaning which includes all three elements of surrender mentioned in the *Gita*: obeisances, submissive inquiry, and service. The disciple approaches the spiritual master with these three kinds of gifts. The spiritual master, for his part, must have the requisite knowledge and determined faith in the Supreme Truth to be able to remove all of the disciple's doubts. The essential characteristic of the spiritual master, then, is that he possesses knowledge of the three categories: *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana*. This is why the *Chaitanya Charitamrta* says: "One who knows the truth about Krishna is qualified to be guru" (*jei krsna-tattva-vetta sei guru haya*).

Thus one should fall at the feet of the spiritual master in the same way as Sanatana Gosvami fell at Lord Chaitanya's feet and asked Him questions which,

in the *Gita* verse 4.34, are called *pariprasna*:

he ami kene amaya jare tapa-traya iha nahi jani ami kemane hita haya

"Who am I? And why do the threefold miseries of material life continually cause me suffering? I do not know the answers to these questions, nor do I know what is ultimately beneficial for me." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.20.102)

The disciple should then serve the guru in such a way that the guru will be pleased. When such a submissive and service-minded devotee asks questions about spiritual life, the spiritual master will reveal to him the truths which he himself has realized.

There are many other examples in the scripture of surrender, submissive inquiry and service. Once, the king of Videha, Nimi, fortuitously came upon the nine great devotees known as the Yogindras who had gathered in his sacrificial arena. Overjoyed to see them, he offered them the worship appropriate to their station and said,

*durlabho manuso deho dehinam ksana-bhangurah tatrapi durlabham
manye vaikuntha-priya-darsanam*

*ata atyantikam ksemam prcchamo bhavato'nagah samsare'smin
ksanardho'pi sat-sangah sevadhir nram*

"Birth in a human body is a very rare achievement for the embodied soul, but I hold that for one having such a short-lived human body, it is even rarer fortune to see a devotee who is dear to the Lord of Vaikuntha. In this world, even a moment's association with saintly persons like yourselves is the greatest treasure in human life. Therefore, I take this opportunity to ask you sinless souls, what is the ultimate good?" (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.2.29-30)

Only sinless, highly realized devotees like the Nava Yogindra are capable of answering King Nimi's submissive inquiry about the ultimate good (*atyantika-ksema*). They had delved into the scriptures and extracted their essential teachings; with great faith and belief, they had applied these teachings in their own lives which are now dedicated to the instruction of others. These are the characteristics of a genuine *acarya* according to the definition given in the *Vayu Purana* '.

acinoti yah sastrartham acare sthapayaty api svayam acarate yasmad acaryas tena kirtitah

"The acarya is thus called because he has studied and understood the meaning of the scripture, he establishes this meaning in the behavior of others, and himself practices what he preaches." (*Manu Samhita*)

As Krishnadasa says of Mahaprabhu: *apani acari jivere sikhaya*—He taught the world by behaving like an exemplary devotee Himself.

How To Pay Obeisances To The Guru

The way to pay obeisances to the guru has been described in the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*:

*dorbhyam padbhyam cajanubhyam urasa sirasa drsa manasa vacasa
ceti pranamo'stanga iritah*

*janubhyam caiva bahubhyam sirasa vacasa dhiya pancangakah pranamah
syat pujasu pravarav imau*

"The *astanga-pranama*, or prostrated obeisance, is performed with the following eight parts of the body: the arms, legs, knees, chest, and head, as well as the eyes, mind, and speech. One should perform the *pancanga-pranama*, or the five-part obeisance, with the knees, the arms, head, words and intelligence. Thus these are the two kinds of obeisances which are performed in the course of one's *puja*." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 8.162-163)

Sanatana Gosvami explains these verses in his commentary: "Obeisances are performed with eyes slightly closed, the hands touching the Lord's feet, with head lowered, and mind meditating on paying obeisances to the Lord. One should pray with words like, 'Lord, be pleased with me.' Indeed, the meaning of paying one's obeisances to the guru, the Vaishnavas, and the Supreme Lord, is to say to them, 'I am surrendering my body to you.'"

If one does not pray to become worthy to give one's body, mind and soul to the spiritual master when paying obeisances then it becomes no more than a physical exercise like pushups. Surely this is not the real purpose of performing prostrations, or *dandavats*, to the guru.

The Necessity Of Taking Initiation

There are two kinds of spiritual master: the instructing spiritual master or *siksha-guru* and the initiating spiritual master. Initiation is necessary for anyone who wants to take up the discipline of devotional *sadhana* — especially deity worship.

Kesava Acarya wrote a great deal about *diksa* in his *Krama-dipika*. The Vaishnava *smṛti*, *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, explains initiation in accordance with his descriptions. There it is said, "Without being initiated, no one has the right to engage in deity worship." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 2.2)

vina diksam hi pujayam nadhikaro'sti karhicit

For this reason, the various *Agamas*, or scriptures in the *Pancaratra* tradition, state that initiation is a necessary (*nitya*) element of the devotional path:

dvijanam anupetanam svakarmadhyayanadisū yathadhikaro nastiha syac copanayanad anu

tathatradiksitanam tu mantra-devarcanadisū nadhikaro 'sty atah kuryad atmanam siva-samstutam

"Just as one born in a brahmin family who has not received the sacred thread is ineligible for the performance of Vedic rituals or the study of the Vedic literature, a person who has not received Vaishnava initiation has no authority to chant the mantra or to worship the deity form of the Lord. Therefore one should take initiation, by which he will become praised by even Lord Shiva." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 2.3-4, *Bhakti-sandarbhā* 283)

In the conversation between Narada and Brahma described in the *Karttika-mahatmya* of the *Skanda Purana*, the following text is found:

te narah pasavo loke kirn tesam jivane phalam yair na labdha barer diksa narcito vajanardanah

"Those human beings who have not been initiated into the service of Lord Hari and have never worshiped Him are comparable to animals. What is the value of their lives?" (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 2.5)

The following verse, found both in the same *Skanda Purana*, in the conversation between Rukmangada and Mohini, as well as in the *Vishnu-yamala*, confirms the necessity of taking initiation:

adiksitasya vamorū krtam sarvām nirarthakam pasu-yonim avapnoti diksa-virahito janah

"Everything done by an uninitiated person is meaningless. One who is not properly initiated will be reborn as an animal." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 2.6)

In his commentary to these verses in the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, Sanatana Gosvami writes the following: "The words *siva-samstutam* refer to initiation, indicating that anyone who takes initiation becomes a Vaishnava and an object of praise to the best of all Vaishnavas, Shiva himself. This is a result of the supremacy of the worship of Vishnu over even that of Shiva. There is a verse which states: 'Anyone who eats without having first offered his food to the Salagrama-sila will for aeons be repeatedly born as a worm in the stool of outcastes and other lower human beings.' Verses such as this indicate that worship of the deity is absolutely necessary, and since one cannot engage in such deity worship without having first been initiated, they also establish the absolute necessity of initiation. Since worship of the Salagrama-sila is given the most prominent place amongst the various types of service performed to the Lord, all other types of devotional activities are being indicated by extension. In other words, initiation is necessary to become eligible for all devotional practices. The necessity of initiation is further supported by Brahma's statement, 'Those human beings who have not been initiated into the service of Lord Hari and have never worshiped Him are comparable to animals.' This verse indicates that without first being initiated, one cannot possibly engage in worship of the deity."¹

It may be asked that since there are descriptions in the scriptures of the great benefits to be derived from even the negligent worship of deities such as Salagrama-sila, then what need is there of taking shelter of a spiritual master and being initiated by him? But the fact is that one will not derive full benefit from his puja if he ignores the established etiquette of worshiping the guru before worshiping the deity.

ato gurum pranamyāivam sarvasvām vinivedya ca grhniyad vaisnavam mantram diksa-purvam vidhanatah

"Therefore, everyone should surrender to a bonafide spiritual master and, after offering him everything-body, mind and property-should take the Vishnu mantra from him according to the appropriate rites of initiation." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 2.10)

The Transformation Of The Disciple By Initiation

In the *Chaitanya Charitamrta*, Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami has explained the transformative effects of initiation:

diksa-kale bhakta kare atma-samarpana sei-kale krsna tare kare atma-sama sei deha kare tara cid-ananda-maya aprakrta-dehe tanra carana bhajaya

"At the time of initiation, when a devotee surrenders to the spiritual master, Krishna makes him equal to Himself. He transforms the devotee's body into spiritual substance; the devotee then worships the Lord in that spiritualized body." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.4.192-3)

When the living being who has taken to the devotional path first surrenders himself to the lotus feet of his spiritual master, then Krishna accepts him as one of His very own. He frees him from the bondage of bodily identity and gives him an experience of his eternal spiritual nature. With this divine knowledge, the devotee takes a spiritual body appropriate for the transcendental service of the Lord. This is the inner mystery of initiation.

To the extent that one is able to grasp the concept of surrender to the spiritual master, one will have clear realization of the spiritual truth. By Krishna's mercy, one will become fully conscious of their divine relationship with the Lord and as one realizes one's own transcendental identity, by this great good fortune, they become eligible for the Lord's direct service. Through the grace of Krishna, a devotee who has received initiation possesses a divine body and is thus able to engage in the Lord's service. Unfortunately, materialistic persons are not able to recognize this transformation and consider the devotee's activities to be on the same level as any other bodily activity. This conception of the guru or Vaishnava's body as material is a great offense. Mahaprabhu Himself stated this:

prabhu hake vaisnava-deha prakrta kabhu naya aprakrta deha bhaktera cid-ananda-maya

"The body of a devotee is never material. It is transcendental, full of spiritual

bliss." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.4.191)

The *Tattva-sagara* also gives further details about this transformative power of the initiation process:

yatha kancanatam yati kamsyam rasa-vidhanatah tatha diksa-vidhanena dvijatvam jay ate nrnam

"Just as bell metal turns into gold when touched by mercury; a person becomes twice-born through the process of initiation." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 2.12)

Sanatana comments that the word *nrnam* here refers to every human being of any race or caste and that being twice-born (*dvijatva*) means *viprata* or brahminhood.

Alchemists were said to know a process by which they could produce gold by mixing mercury with bell metal (an alloy of copper and tin). Anybody might go around calling himself an alchemist, deceiving some ignorant people and cheating them of their money, but that does not make one any less ignorant of this process and incapable of executing it. We may say the same of initiation: though the above verse indicates that through *diksa* an ordinary person gains the qualities of a brahmin, when a so-called guru makes a mere show of initiating without the appropriate knowledge or expertise, no good can be expected to come of it. If one has not oneself come to possess the advanced spiritual understanding, that is, if one has not come to be a knower of Krishna as the supreme truth (*krsna-tattva-vetta*) and has not become free of sinful activity as a consequence of that knowledge, and still takes the responsibility of giving out initiation, then the result is the same as that of a blind person leading other blind persons into a ditch.

The Qualifications Of The Disciple And The Spiritual Master

In view of the great importance and the responsibility involved in giving and taking initiation, it is regrettable that in most circumstances both disciple and guru are unqualified for their role and the value of the sacrament is lost. Some persons call themselves guru when they do not have the gravity necessary for the task. They merely play the role of a bonafide spiritual master out of insolence. Similarly, a disciple in name only will pretend to have the humility of a spiritual seeker. These two types of persons find each other out and use each other for material gratifications such as wealth, fame, and prestige. The reciprocation

between them is restricted to these fleeting gains, rather than anything of true value. They may dress the part; they may even engage in the worship of the deity and in the study of the scriptures, but all of these activities are superficial and lack internal substance. Therefore, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada has written in his poem, "Who is a Vaishnava?" (*Vaisnava ke?*) -

*sri dayita-dasa kirtanete asa kara uccaihsvare harinama rava prana achejara,
sei hetu pracara prana-hina jata krsna-gatha sava*

"O mind! This humble servant of Radha and Krishna, Varsabhanavi-dayita dasa, placing his hopes in kirtana, loudly sings the names of Lord Hari! Those who have spiritual life in abundance preach the Lord's message. Whatever is spoken about Krishna without the life of realization resembles nothing more than a cadaver."

Bhaktivinoda Thakura also states in his book of songs, *Saranagati*, that the life of a devotee is the process of surrender that was taught by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu: *sikhan saranagati bhakateraprana*. This surrender consists of six different attitudes, all of which must be executed with complete sincerity. If persons are not revived by the process of surrender, then in whatever preaching activity they engage in, they will be just like actors playing a role on the stage. If the preaching of religious principles is carried out in this way, is it not to be expected that their preachers will become a laughing stock? For this reason, one who has not the weight of spiritual realization should not blacken the glorious seat intended for the supremely munificent guru.

A person whose heart is full of the desires for materialistic sense gratification should not make a pretense of being a genuine seeker of spiritual truth simply as a way of extracting some ulterior benefit from the spiritual path. If such falsehood permeates both the spiritual master and the disciple, then it cannot be expected that either of them attain anything approximating the ultimate good.

Our most worshipable Srila Prabhupada wrote:

*kanaka-kamini pratistha-baghim chariyache jare sei to vaisnava sei anasakta sei
suddha-bhakta samsar tatha pay parabhava*

"One who has been abandoned by the tigress of money, beautiful women, and fame is truly a Vaishnava. Such a soul alone is truly detached; such a soul is a pure devotee. The illusory creation of repeated birth and death is defeated before

him." (From *Vaisnava ke?*)

Krishna Himself says that it takes great effort to come to the point of being able to worship Him properly, in other words, to come to the position of being able to initiate others in the act of worshiping Him:

yesam tv anta-gatam papam jananam punya-karmanam te dvandva-moha-nirmukta bhajante mam drdha-vratah

"But those persons of virtuous deeds, in whom sinfulness has been eradicated, worship Me with great steadfastness in their vows, free from the bewilderment of sensual life." (*Gita 7.28*)

The sum and substance is that one who is blinded by ignorance may play the role of a guru but will not be able to remove another's blindness of ignorance. The *Skanda Purana* gives the following etymology of the word guru:

gu-sabdasya tv andhakarasya ru-sabdasya tan-nivarakah andhakara-nirodhitvad gurur ity abhidhiyate

"The syllable 'gu' refers to the darkness of ignorance; the syllable 'm' means that which impedes it. Thus the guru is so named because he eradicates the darkness of ignorance in others."

How then can one who is covered by ignorance give divine, transcendental, spiritual knowledge consisting of metaphysical knowledge of God and creation, the process of devotional service, and the goal of love of God? Rather, unqualified persons who falsely present themselves as spiritual masters are engaged in bringing about ruin on themselves and the world. The relation between a spiritual master and his disciple is something of great significance. It is a great responsibility—indeed, it is a matter of life and death. Yet, out of their greed for gain, prestige, and adoration, there are still irresponsible people who treat it as lightly as a child's game.

The Divine Character Of The Guru

I should see my guru as a great personality, the only helmsman who can navigate across the immeasurable ocean of material suffering and take me to the other side. It is he who plants the seed of devotion in my heart and then sprinkles it with the water of the divine sounds of Krishna's name and scriptural knowledge.

The seed then germinates and grows until finally it traverses the Viraja River which forms the border between this world and the next. When my devotional creeper crosses the spiritual worlds to enter the divine abodes of Krishna—Dvaraka, Mathura, and finally the most beautiful *dhama*, Vrindavan — my guru winds it around the desire tree of Krishna's lotus feet, giving me the chance to taste the delicious fruits of love of God which ripen on it. The guru is my only true friend in this world and the next. He is thus my only worshipable divinity and if I foolishly think of him as an ordinary human being, it is certain that all my chanting of mantras, my worship of the deity, indeed, all my spiritual activities will be fruitless like oblations of clarified butter on the ashes of the sacrificial fire.

Lord Sri Krishna Himself said to His dear associate Uddhava:

acaryam mam vijaniyan navamanyeta karhicit na martya-buddhyasuyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruh

"A disciple should consider the teacher to be My very self and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him to be an ordinary man, for he is the sum total of all the demigods." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.17.27)

One should not think of the mantra, the *mantra-devata*, and the guru as being distinct from each other. The most sinful people think that the spiritual master is an ordinary human being like them. If someone commits offenses and angers the Supreme Lord, the spiritual master can intercede with the Lord on behalf of his disciple. On the other hand, if the spiritual master becomes angry with his disciple, Krishna will not even turn around to look at the offender. Nor should one think that other gods and deities can offer respite to such an offender. Therefore one should take great care to satisfy the spiritual master.

"Whatever words are uttered by the spiritual master should be considered equal to the Vedic revelation. Anyone who disbelieves his words or derides his directions has no possibility of achieving any kind of auspiciousness."

Compared to the act of surrendering to the spiritual master, performing pilgrimage, austerities, muttering prayers and mantras, meditation and concentration, following of rules and regulations and keeping vows, taking bath and giving in charity are all ineffective for self-purification. On the other hand, service to the guru's lotus feet, in other words, the effort to please him, is the

essence of a disciple's spiritual practice. Even if one's life is at risk, they should not abandon the spiritual master's directives. One should be willing to give up his life in the service of the spiritual master.

Though one should certainly make an effort to understand the preceptor's words, a disciple should never criticize them nor try to demonstrate an absence of logic in them. One who knows the secret of satisfying Krishna and is constantly engaged in the life of devotion should not be considered less of a guru if he lacks knowledge of grammar or logic. In this regard, a disciple has no authority to judge the guru's actions.

On the other hand, if the disciples have any question about their own service, there is no fault if they were to humbly submit it to the guru's judgement with the intention of accepting his verdict. If one tries to prove that he is more intelligent than the spiritual master, his downfall is inevitable. There is a Bengali saying: *ati buddhi galay dari*—"One who is too smart for his own good ends up with a noose around his neck.

Disciples should be ready to sacrifice their independence to carry out the guru's orders, providing personal service wholeheartedly even when the guru does not ask for it. The disciples prove their devotion to the spiritual master by giving him water, food or bathwater. They should be prepared to render service to the guru at every minute; and when engaged in such service, they should never give quarter to service offenses like laziness or inattention. Rather, they should fix their mind on the satisfaction of the guru's senses. Torpor, distraction, indifference and negligence are equally considered to be offenses to the Holy Name.

One must always recall the instructions of Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami as heard from the lips of the spiritual master.

*guru vaisnava bhagavan tinera smarana tinera smarane hay a vighna-
vinasana anayase hay a nija vanchita purana*

"I meditate on the guru, the Vaishnavas, and the Lord. By remembering them, all obstacles are destroyed and one quickly attains the fulfillment of his desires."
(*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.1.20-21)

This is the instruction of the great authorities.

The Guru's Mercy

If an aspirant for pure devotion meditates on the guru, is conscious of him and is fixed in his service, then whether he or she is physically near to the spiritual master or far away, there is no chance of being troubled by the enemies of lust and anger. And if they do come near, then all the *sadhaka* has to do is call out loudly to the spiritual master for help and he will certainly protect him or her.

One who has received the guru's mercy will automatically find good association. A serious aspirant for spiritual perfection should not waste any time in useless activities. For one who is a beginner in devotional life, however, a life of worship in a secluded place is not recommended as it is fraught with danger. At this stage, he should remain constantly in the presence of the spiritual master or in the company of those who have received the spiritual master's mercy and take up the spiritual master's service under their direction. Otherwise, lust and anger will see devotees sitting alone and unprotected and will attack him or her without their even realizing it. One should always remember the following words of a *mahajana*:

may are kariya jaya charano na jaya sadhu krpa bina ara nahika upaya

"On one's own, it is impossible to conquer Maya and leave her behind. There is no means to do it other than through the grace of the saints."

Without the permission and blessings of the spiritual master, no disciple should go to visit the homes of past friends or even one's own family members or engage in conversation with them. One must at all costs avoid the association of women, the association of those who are attached to women, or the association of non-devotees who think that fruitive activities or learning are the highest objective in life. The disciple should always seek that which is helpful to his spiritual life and reject that which is detrimental to it. In all matters, large or small, he should take the spiritual master's advice. He should not take up any work without his approval.

The Lord's external energy takes many forms in order to deceive us, constantly lurking about waiting for the opportunity to mislead us. She weakens the minds of even very learned, intelligent and powerful people, making them disinterested in service to the Lord. The spiritual master has taken up Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mission and is begging all of us to chant Krishna's name, to

worship Krishna, and to learn about Krishna. He tells us to keep our goal fixed in our sights and to chant 100,000 names daily without fail. We must bow down and humbly accept his directions, giving our lives to carry them out.

The spiritual master is preaching Lord Chaitanya's message everywhere. He says:

jare dekha tare kaha krsna-upadesa amara ajnaya guru hand tara ei desa

"Teach everyone you see this message of devotion to Krishna. On My command, become a guru and deliver this land." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.7.128)

The essence of this instruction is that one should practice the principles taught by the guru and to preach them in the mentality of service to him, and not that one puts on airs and pretends to be a spiritual master.

The Disciple's Attitude

Every intelligent disciple should think that the entire universe's well-being depends on his character and strict adherence to spiritual life. They should take the welfare of the entire world as his own personal responsibility.

Therefore, before criticizing the activities of others, he makes sure that his own example of devotional practice is maintained without any blemish. If he does so, then not only does he benefit, but truly everyone throughout the world will also profit.

The disciple thinks as follows: "I have taken shelter of the guru and been initiated by him. I have now embarked on the road to pure devotion. If my behavior is faulty, then people will not stop at criticizing only me, but will also find fault with my spiritual master, my worshipable deity, the devotional path, the entire Vaishnava sampradaya, the previous *acaryas*, even religion itself. They will disparage the scriptures, the great authorities who wrote them, and everyone who follows their injunctions. In the end, they will criticize belief in God itself and all doctrines leading to a higher, transcendental goal in life. They will even condemn my father and mother and their families.

As a result, I will have become blameworthy before all these people and end up in a hellish existence for many births with nothing to say in my defense.

"If a true devotee takes birth in any family, whatever its social status, then that entire family is purified by his presence. His mother's life is successful. His home and the land of his birth is glorious. His ancestors in heaven dance in joy that a devotee has taken birth amongst their descendants and out of the expectation that they will receive oblations of *maha-prasada* and the Lord's *caranamrta* to bring them good fortune. If I fall from the standard of behavior expected of a saintly person and Vaishnava, then immediately all the generations of my family will fall into hell. Can I fall down in this way and become the shame and misfortune of my entire family? Just as a drop of ink on a white cloth is clearly visible, the misbehavior of a person who has taken to the religious life stands out and attracts the criticisms of all."

Even so, one should not stick to the spiritual life simply out of fear of being criticized. Devotion to the Lord is the natural activity of the soul. If one takes up the path of such devotion according to the scriptural injunctions, not only is his personal welfare assured, but that of everyone in the world.

Initiation Is The Transmission Of Divine Knowledge

Srila Sanatana Gosvami further explains *diksa* as the transmission of divine knowledge. The following verse is from the *Vishnu-yamala*:

divyam jnanam yato dadyat kuryat papasya sanksayam

tasmad dikseti sa prokta desikais tattva-kovidaih

"Those who are expert in the study of the revealed scriptures consider *diksa* to be the process which gives one transcendental knowledge and causes the destruction of all sinful reactions." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 2.9)

The spiritual master gives his disciple knowledge of 10 basic tenets of spiritual knowledge, the *dasa-mula*, consisting of the authoritative source of knowledge (*pramana*) — the Vedic scriptures and the *acaryas* in the disciplic succession — and the nine *prameyas*, the nine elements which are proved by this authority. These include seven aspects of relationships (*sambandha*), namely Krishna Himself; Krishna's energies; Krishna's divine mood (*rasa*); the soul, its bondage and its liberation; the inconceivable oneness and difference of the Lord and the individual soul; the *abhidheya*, *bhakti*, and the *prayojana*, love of God. The one who bestows the divine grace of this knowledge on his disciple is the supreme benefactor — the spiritual master.

Because the spiritual master recognizes the capacity of the disciple to take up either the *vaidhi* or *raganuga* devotional paths, he is a knower of the science of Krishna. This is the defining characteristic of the divine preceptor.

kiba vipra kiba nyasi sudra kene naya jei krsna tattva vetta sei guru haya

"Whether one belongs to the brahmin, *sudra* or any other caste, or to the *sannyasa* or any other *asrama*, if he knows the science of Krishna, he is qualified to be a guru." {*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.8.128)

The disciple approaches such a preceptor with humility, honest inquiry, and a spirit of service and learns the divine knowledge of *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana*. Then the disciple takes up the path of worship, for one who worships is exalted, whereas a nondevotee is lowly and insignificant — *jei bhaje sei bara, abhakta hina chara* (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.4.67). Just learning a few impressive and knowledgeable-sounding verses by heart and becoming a platform lecturer and giving speeches is not adequate for obtaining the Lord's mercy. The proof of one's realization or spiritual experience is his *bhajana*. It is not enough to be able to explain the offenses to the Holy Name (*namaparadha*), its reflection (*namabhasa*), and the full manifestation of its glories; one has to give up offenses and chant the Holy Names in a pure devotional attitude and taste their sweetness for oneself. Then only will the Lord in the form of His own name be pleased and destroy all obstacles to the practitioner's spiritual life and, ultimately, bestow love of God on him.

The *Bhagavata* religion (*Bhagavata-dharma*) consists of all the instructions the Lord Himself gave to His own students such as Arjuna and Uddhava. This religion is the process by which even the most ignorant and unlearned person can easily attain direct contact with the Lord. One should consider the spiritual master to be one's worshipable deity and take instruction from him in the *Bhagavata Dharma*. Then one should engage in a life of devotion, cultivating consciousness of the Lord according to the guru's direction.

guru-mukha-padma-vakya cittete kariya aikya am na kariha mane asa sri guru carane rati, ei se uttama gati je prasade pure sarva asa

"Fix your mind on the words emanating from the lotus mouth of the spiritual master. Place your hopes in nothing else. Affection for the guru's lotus feet is the ultimate goal, for by his mercy all of one's aspirations are realized." (Narottama

dasa, *Prema-bhakti-candrika*)

The blessings of the guru result in liberation from all obstacles arising out of one's own impurities and the hope for the intimate service of Their Lordships Radha and Madhava comes to fruition and one's life becomes successful. Once the disciples have received the 32-syllable *Maha-mantra* and *Pancardrika* initiation in the 18-syllable mantra, they still have many things to learn from the spiritual master. The various aspects of devotional practice which must be learned from the guru are explained in more detail in the next chapter.

If one has no devotion for the spiritual master, who is a form of the Lord — His *prakasa-vigraha* — or for the pure devotees who are fixed up in divine attachment for the Lord, then there is no way that he can fathom the vast ocean of the scriptures and discover their essential teachings. This is stated in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (6.23):

*yasya deve para bhaktir yatha deve tatha gurau tasyaite kathita hy
arthah prakasante mahatmanah*

"Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, who is His manifestation and non-different from Him, are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed."

CHAPTER 8 DUTIES OF AN INITIATED DISCIPLE

Anyone who has taken shelter of and initiation from a genuine Vaishnava guru automatically garners the right to serve the Lord's deity form. Indeed, the *Pancaratra* scriptures (also known as Agamas) say that if one does not do so, he incurs fault:

labdhva mantram tu yo nityani narcayen mantra-devatam sarva-karma-phalam tasya-nistam yacchati devata

"If one has been initiated and does not regularly worship his mantra's deity, then the deity sees to it that all his projects fail." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 3.3)

It must be remembered, however, that without the appropriate conduct, or *sad-acara*, one cannot engage in the worship of the deity. Therefore the moral conduct appropriate to a Vaishnava is absolutely necessary to one's spiritual advancement. The definition of *sadacara* is found in the *Vishnu Purana* (3.11.3) :

sadhavah ksina-dosas tu sac-chabdah sadhu-vacakah esam acaranarh yat tu sad-acarah sa ucyate

"The *sadhu* is one whose faults have been eliminated. The word *sat* refers to the *sadhu*. The behavior of the *sadhus* is therefore known as *sad-acara*. " (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 3.8)

It is further stated in the *Bhavisyottara Purana*,

acara-prabhavo dharmah santas cacara-laksanah sadhunam ca yatha vrttam sa sad-acara isyate

acara eva dharmasya mulam rajan kulasya ca acarad vicyuto jantur na kulino na dharmikah

"Dharma (religion) is based in conduct. Sainly persons are also recognized by their conduct. Thus the activities of the saintly are given the name *sad-acara*.

Duty and nobility are rooted in conduct, O king! He who does not maintain standards of conduct is neither noble nor righteous." (Hari-bhakti-vilasa 3.15-16)

Sad-acara comprises all aspects of an initiated devotee's behavior, from broad matters of the regulative principles to one's daily routine, from rising in the *brahma-muhurta* period until he takes rest at night. They also include various regular duties related to specific days such as Ekadasis and feast days. All of these things have been described in such religious lawbooks as the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*.

Hari-bhakti-vilasa, however, gives far more regulation than is possible for anyone to follow. The disciple should therefore seek specific instruction from the spiritual master about what exactly he must or must not do. The essence of all instructions, however, should be kept in mind. That essence is to always remember the spiritual master, the Vaishnavas, and the Supreme Lord, and the essence of all prohibitions is to never forget them. Whatever injunctions and prohibitions are found in the scripture are merely variations on this theme.

Instructions Of The Spiritual Master To The Student Preparing To Take Initiation

The second chapter of the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* discusses the process of initiation. Upon being initiated, the disciple should immediately chant the mantra 108 times.

One should chant one's mantra understanding that there is no distinction between the initiating spiritual master, the mantra given by the guru, and the deity of that mantra. After doing so, the disciple should take instruction from the spiritual master in the various activities which go with knowledge of the mantra, such as the *nyasas*, *dhyanas*, and other aspects of devotional ritual.

The general duties of the initiated disciple are called *samaya* in Sanskrit, or "agreement." The *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* gives two lists of samayas. The first (which contains twelve rules) comes from the *Pancaratra* literature, and the second contains 104 prescriptions and prohibitions from the *Vishnu-yamala*. Here I will comment on some items of devotional service. Others have been explained elsewhere in this book in greater detail.

Keeping The Mantra Secret

(1) The *Narada-pancaratra* list begins with the following instruction:

*sva-manthro nopadestavyo vaktavyas ca na samsadi gopaniyam tatha
sastram raksaniyam sariravat*

"The guru tells the disciple not to instruct anyone in the mantra publicly, nor reveal his mantra in a public assembly. One should always keep the mantra and the scriptures containing confidential material like the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and details about *puja* secret—protecting them as he would his own body." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 2.136)

Elsewhere in *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* (2.146), another verse is quoted from the *Sammohana-tantra* which also says that one should keep his *ista-devata*, his guru and his mantra secret. It also says that he should also keep his japa-mala hidden which is why Gaudiya Vaishnavas always keep their japa beads hidden from view in a cloth bag.

*gopayed devatam istam gopayed gurum atmanah gopayec ca nijam
mantram gopayen nija-malikam*

However, some people incorrectly interpret the words *sva-manthro nopadestavyah* to mean that the guru should not initiate any disciple in the same mantra that he has received from his guru. If this is the case, then what does the guru do at the time of giving mantra to his disciple—make one to measure by cutting a word here and adding another there according to his whims? Would this not disrupt the mantra, interfering with its already perfect form? There are so many mantras, each with a fixed number of syllables, such as the four-, six-, eight-, 10-, 12-, 18-, or 32-syllable mantras. Did the guru receive them from his predecessor gurus in a transformed state? And even if he did, does he have the right to transform it again before whispering it into his disciple's ear? If so, the original, genuine article would soon get lost forever amidst all the transformed and disfigured mantras!

The mantra is said to be the Param Brahman's sound incarnation. If that is the case, then who has the authority or power to change it or reduce it in size? Will not any guru who gives or a disciple who accepts such a disfigured mantra have to suffer the consequences of his offensive action by entering a hellish state after death?

Is this actually the rule which is applied at initiation? I have personally seen a

handwritten mantra given by a so-called guru from a Gosvami family to his disciples, in which he deliberately made spelling mistakes and left out entire words. When I saw it, I realized that the guru had likely been trying to follow this misconceived understanding of the above verse and at the same time trying to keep his disciple under his influence by giving him an incomplete mantra.

Another incorrect interpretation of the above verse is given as follows: Some say that if you have received the 18-syllable mantra from your spiritual master, that is your own mantra, or *sva-mantra*. You are, in this understanding, not to instruct your disciple in this mantra, but to give him another, such as the 10-syllable mantra. My question is, how is the principle of disciplic succession maintained in this case? Should a spiritual master not initiate his disciple in the same mantra that he has received from his guru? If he has himself been initiated in the 18-syllable mantra, what gives him the right to innovate by giving the 10-syllable mantra to his own disciple? How then has he maintained the principle of adherence to the path of spiritual life set out by the previous teachers in the disciplic succession? The very principle of the *parampara* will lose its integrity if this distorted concept of initiation is followed.

We have to look more closely at the grammar of the verse *sva-mantra nopadestavyo vaktavyas ca na samsadi*. Since the negative particle *na* appears twice in this line, some people divide it into two separate parts, *sva-mantra nopadestavyo* and *ca samsadi na vaktavyah*. The first part then means "one should not instruct his disciple in his own mantra, i.e., the mantra which he himself has received from his guru." In fact, we should take the word *samsadi*, "in the assembly," or, "in public," to be read with both verbs in the verse. Thus, we arrive at the idea that "one should not instruct his disciple in his mantra in public, nor should he speak it aloud in public." The intelligent reader can judge whether this interpretation of the verse is more logical or closer to the original intention of the author than that of the caste Gosvamis.

There is another school of thought according to which *sudras* should be given a different mantra than upper-caste Vaishnavas. Rather than giving them a mantra with *pranava (om)* and the word *svaha*, the gurus of this school give a mantra with another seed syllable and the word *namah*. Sometimes they give a mantra without any seed syllable at all, simply attaching the word *namah*. We wonder whether these kinds of gurus are trying to free themselves from any possibility of contamination which may come from taking disciples from the lower caste. But does anyone have the right to disfigure or transform the mantra

according to his or her whim? Is there not something offensive about taking something which is a complete whole and cutting it up into bits?

Since Sanatana Gosvami Prabhu has not commented on this particular verse, we have explained it according to the teachings and example of our own revered spiritual master.

Other Instructions From The Narada-pancaratra

To return to the other samayas:

(2)

*vaisnavanam para bhaktir acaryanam visesatah pjanani ca yatha-sakti tan
apannams capalayet*

"The disciple should be devoted to all the Vaishnavas, but in particular to the *acaryas*. He should perform *puja* to them according to his ability, and protect them if they are ever in danger. In other words, the disciple should make all efforts to serve the Vaishnavas, using his life energy, wealth, intelligence, and words." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 2.137)

(3) When taking the flowers and other waste materials from the temple, the disciple should carry them on his head. They should be disposed of into running water and never be allowed to touch the ground. One should always be careful not to show any disrespect for these things as they have been sanctified by use in the temple and are considered *prasada*.

(4) The disciple should consider his worshipable deity, Vishnu, to be present in the moon and the sun, in the cow, in the Asvattha tree, and in fire, as well as within the body of the guru and the brahmins.

(5) The disciple should never remain in a place where he knows that his spiritual master has been blasphemed. He should immediately fix his mind on the Supreme Lord and leave the scene. It is very dangerous to listen to the criticism of one's own guru. Scripture says: "O Narada! Never listen to someone who has blasphemed the spiritual master, the Supreme Lord, or the scriptures. Never live in the same place with such a person, nor indulge in conversation with him."

(6) The disciple should remember his *ista-mantra* especially when walking, about to leave on a trip, giving in charity, early in the morning, and whenever away from home.

(7) If the disciple has a wondrous divine vision, either in dreams' or in a waking state, he should not reveal it to anyone other than the guru.

In another *Pancaratra* text, it is said that (8) the disciple should not eat fish or meat; (9) he should not eat from a plate made of bell metal, or leaves of the holy fig tree; (10) he should not spit or blow his nose in the temple room; (11) he should not enter the inner sanctum of the deities with any kind of footwear on.

Keeping The Ekadasi Vow

In the same text it is said that the disciple (12) should not eat on Ekadasi, either in the waxing or waning phases of the moon. He should perform a special puja on Ekadasi and keep vigil on that night. This is stated in *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* (2.147)—*jagaram nisi kurvita visesac carcayed vibhum*. In this verse, the word *visesat* has been explained in Sanatana's commentary as follows: *visesad iti anya-tithibhyo visesena ekadasyam tatrapi visesato jagarane'rcayed ity arthah*. That is, "On Ekadasi one should keep vigil in a way that is not done on other nights. While maintaining this vigil, one should perform special worship of the deity."

There are, in fact injunctions for the vigil to the effect that in each of the three-hour periods or *praharas* of the night, one should engage in special worship activities such as *puja*, making food offerings, performing *aratrika*, reading loudly from scriptures, and chanting the Holy Names and other hymns congregationally.

Injunctions From The Vishnu-yamala

In another *Pancaratra Agama* named the *Vishnu-yamala*, it is said that even before receiving the mantra from the guru, the disciple must agree to follow 104 rules. It is stated that the spiritual master must attentively examine a prospective disciple for at least a year and explain these 104 rules and regulations to him. Of these, there are 52 injunctions, given as follows:

(1) to rise during the brahma-muhurta;

- (2) to wake the deity of Mahavisnu;
- (3) to perform the light ceremony, *mangalaratrika*, to the deity with musical instruments;
- (4) to take a morning bath according to the rules;
- (5) to put on a pair of pure and new garments, i.e., an upper and lower garment;¹ [One may wonder how someone who is engaged in daily worship of the deity can possibly procure new clothes every single day. Perhaps some very rich persons can afford to do so, but this is not possible for everyone. So this injunction should be understood to mean that one's garments should daily be washed in pure water.];
- (6) to worship one's personal deity [Sanatana Gosvami says that this means offering water while one is taking one's bath, and does not refer to the temple deity worship, which is enjoined separately.];
- (7) to make the tilak markings on the forehead with *gopicandana* or some other pure clay or earth, such as that from Radha Kund or the base of a *tulasi* plant;
- (8) using *gopicandana* to daily decorate the body with the five weapons of Lord Vishnu, namely the conch, discus, mace, sword, and bow; [this custom is not followed by the Gaudiya Vaishnavas who simply mark twelve parts of the body with tilak];
- (9) to take *caranamrta*, the water which has washed the deity;
- (10) to wear necklaces made of *tulasi* and precious metals or jewels; [Gaudiya Vaishnavas simply wear a few strands of *tulasi* beads around the neck];
- (11) to remove the leftover flowers from the deity of Vishnu and His altar;
- (12) to smear the deity's used sandalwood on the body as *prasada*;
- (13) to worship one's personal deity in the Salagrama-sila or the image;
- (14) to eat Lord Vishnu's *tulasi* remnants or to place them on the head as a decoration;

- (15) to pick *tulasi* leaves according to the regulations;
- (16) to perform the *Pancaratriki* meditation on the mantra three times a day according to the regulations;
- (17) to tie one's Sikha at the beginning of worship or the performance of *sandhya*;
- (18) to make one's offerings (*tarpana*) to the forefathers with Lord Vishnu's *caranamrta*;
- (19) to serve the deity (if one has the ability), in a manner befitting a king;
- (20) to perform the regular (*nitya-kriya*) and occasional (*naimittika-kriya*) rites only when they do not go against the principles of devotion to Vishnu. [Nitya-kriya are rites such as bathing and chanting one's mantras, etc., while the *naimittika-kriya* are rites of passage, such as making offerings to the ancestors (*sraddha*, *tarpana*), etc.]
- (21) to perform before *sandhya* and puja, the *bhuta-suddhi* ("self-purification") and *nyasas*;²
- (22) to offer fresh seasonal fruits and flowers to the Lord.

The Offerings Of The Devotee And Non-devotee

Devotees consider pure love of God to be the ultimate goal of life. Fruitive workers consider the ability to execute their prescribed duties, wealth, and sense gratification to be the goals of life, or *purusarthas*. These are the grosser purposes which motivate their actions. On a more subtle level, philosophers are interested in the goal of liberation. Devotees, however, consider that in all these cases, there is either a gross or subtle desire for satisfying the personal senses. Thus they remain as far away as possible from the association of those who have these four types of selfish desire. Such persons may make a pretense of worshipping the deity of Narayana despite their selfish motivations, but when they come with *prasada*, the devotees are reluctant to accept it from them as they are afraid it will have negative effects on their pure attitude of devotion. The Lord Himself is eager to accept the offerings of a pure devotee, but is completely indifferent to the offerings of a superficial devotee who has no interest other than his own sense gratification. There is a verse from

Chaitanya Charitamrta which supports this idea:

bhaktera dravya prabhu kari kari khaya abhaktera dravya prabhu ulati na caya

"The Lord snatches the food from a devotee and eats it; He does not even turn to look at the food of a nondevotee."

The Lord took great pleasure in such ordinary food offerings such as the broken rice of the great devotee, Vidura's wife, the four handfuls of flat rice brought by Sudama Vipra, the devotee Sridhara's banana flowers and banana tree cores, and the coconut water of Raghava Pundit. On the other hand, the high-priced confections of the non-devotees such as Duryodhana held no attraction for Him.

Then again, though the Lord has no interest in the offerings of non-devotees, He has a merciful attitude to the simple or those ignorant of spiritual truths. Though He does not immediately accept their worship, He guides them into the association of devotees. Through the association of pure devotees, these innocent persons (*balisa*) soon become conscious of Vaishnava theology. Then they become fortunate enough to take shelter of a spiritual master and learn the secrets of worshiping the Supreme Lord. Krishna Himself states in the *Bhagavad-gita*:

patram puspam phalam toyam yo me bhaktya prayacchati tad aham bhakty-upahrtam asnami prayatatmanah

"If someone with a pure heart offers Me a leaf, a fruit, a flower or some water with devotion, I gladly accept his gift of love."(Gita 9.26)

"The worshipers of other demigods go to great pains to make offerings to Me made up of wonderful ingredients, but since their faith is momentary, I do not accept them. The reason is that they feel under some compulsion to make these offerings and are not truly sincere."

The Lord in His deity form not only accepts the affectionate offerings of His exclusive devotees, He sometimes goes so far as to actually eat them. According to the commentators, the words *prayatatmanah* in the above verse is interpreted to mean "one whose body and mind are pure." They go on to paraphrase the Lord's words as follows, "I therefore do not accept the offerings of someone whose body is impure, in other words, women who are having their monthly

period and others are not to make such offerings" (*apavitra-sariratve sati nasnamiti rajasvaladayo vyavrttah*).

(23) to regularly worship the *tulasi* plant;

(24) to regularly worship the *Srimad Bhagavatam*;

(25) to worship Vishnu three times a day—in the morning, at midday, and in the evening;

(26) to daily hear the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and other scriptures such as the *Puranas*;

(27) to wear the clothes which have been worn by the deity;

(28) to accept pious works as the order of the Lord Himself and to perform them in a spirit of service, thinking, "I am being engaged according to Your will" (*yatha niyukto 'smi tatha karomi*);

(29) to accept the orders of the spiritual master;

(30) to believe in the words of the spiritual master;

(31) to decorate oneself with one's own mudras (*sva-mudra-racanam*).

The Vaishnava Symbols

Sanatana Gosvami explains in his commentary that "one's own" means those which are related to one's personal object of worship as designated by the mantra. But he does not explain the word *mudra*, which has several different meanings. In the Berhampore edition of the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, this word is explained as "the tilak, etc., which pertain to one's own *sampradaya*."

Worshippers of Laksmi-Narayana and other devotees of the Lord's majestic features not only mark their bodies with the weapons of the Lord (as in number 8 above), but also place other markings representing the Fish incarnation, the Tortoise incarnation, etc. These markings, which are often stamped on the body, are also called *mudra*. Sometimes *tapta-mudra* or permanent markings of this sort are branded on the body by Vaishnavas of the Madhva or Ramanuja schools. This is a custom that is not followed by the Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

An extended description of these markings is given in the fifteenth chapter of the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*. There it is said:

"On the twelfth day of the waxing moon in the month of Asadha (June-July), when Lord Hari is about to go to sleep, an initiated Vaishnava should break his Ekadasi fast and then brand the symbols (*tapta-mudra*) of Vishnu on his *body*" (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 15.24)

This marking of the body is compared to a faithful wife's wearing the signs of marriage such as conchshell bracelets. The verse mentions that Lord Hari is about to take rest. In fact, the preceding day is the Sayana Ekadasi which marks the beginning of the Caturmasya period during which Lord Vishnu is said to be sleeping. Dvadasi is sometimes said to be an extension of Ekadasi, thus this kind of statement is permissible. In some circumstances, one may have the *tapta-mudra* done on the Ekadasi day itself. The same injunction is also given for Parsva Ekadasi (which marks the halfway point in the Caturmasya when Vishnu is said to turn over in His sleep) and Utthana Ekadasi (at the end of the four month period, when Vishnu rises).

Hari-bhakti-vilasa (15.52) goes on to describe the symbols, which are also called Vishnu's five weapons (*pancayudha*) and where on the body they should be branded. Vishnu's club named Kaumudaki goes on the forehead; on the head, Vishnu's bow and quiver; over the heart goes Vishnu's sword named Nandaka; brahmins should place His discus Sudarsana on the right arm, His conch on the left.

Though these three days are set aside for the marking of the symbols of Vishnu with a red-hot iron, on all other occasions Vaishnavas use *gopicandana clay* to make such marks. Thus it is said, "The intelligent person daily marks himself with the symbols such as the discus with *gopicandana*. On Sayana Ekadasi and other specific dates, one brands these symbols on the body." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 4.116)

In this same chapter of the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, a section of the *Gautamiya-tantra* is quoted, giving the regulations for the use of *gopicandana* for marking the body with Vishnu's symbols: "One should place the discus on the right arm, the conchshell on both the left and the right; the mace on the left, and below the mace, another discus. Above the conchshell on both arms one should stamp the lotus. The sword goes on the chest and the bow along with the quiver go on the

head. Every Vaishnava should first wear the five weapons of Vishnu; then he should stamp the symbol of the Fish incarnation on the right hand and the Tortoise on the left." It is also said, "A brahmin should place Sudarsana-cakra, the Fish and lotus on his right arm, the conch, lotus, and mace on the left arm." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 4.110-113)

Sanatana writes in his commentary to verse 111 that, in fact, one can place any of the mudras on any part of the body as he wishes. This is further confirmed by the *Hari-bhaktivilasa* which states: "Alternatively, following the traditions of his own *sampradaya's acaryas*, one can place the conch, discus, and other markings on any part of the body he likes, adding out of devotion the specific markings which signify his personal deity." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 4.114)

Scripture says that the person whose body is decorated with markings representing the Lord's conch, etc., can never be invaded by sin. These symbols act as a shield, or *kavaca*, for the Vaishnava.

For those in our disciplic succession (Sanatana specifies in his commentary) these symbols are the flute, etc., which recall Sri Krishna. In the next verse (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 4.115), it is said that some people place the discus and the conchshell together (*cakrasankhau ca dharyete sammisrav eva kaiscana*). Sanatana explains: "There can be no fault in wearing the sign of Krishna's conch, for it is the Lord's eternal associate and one of the foremost of His devotees. It is said that on one occasion the wife of a brahmin miscarried on hearing its sound. The brahmin was angry and cursed the conch to take birth as a demon. It was during this particular birth as the son of the demon Pancajanya that it received the name Pancajanya. Because of this demonic connection, certain Vaishnavas place the sign of the conch separately."

The *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* (4.117) states that alternatively one should stamp the body, either with the names of the Lord or with the entire mantras such as that of eight syllables (*om narayanaya namah*) or that of five syllables (*klim krsnaya svaha*); (*mudra va bhagavan-namnankita vastaksaradibhih*).

In our disciplic succession, some Vaishnavas who worship in the *madhura-rasa* stamp the names of Gaura, the Hare Krishna mantra, or the Lord's footprints on their chest, arms or elsewhere. The purpose of such a custom is to help one to remember the Lord. This is also the fundamental intention behind placing the tilak on twelve parts of the body and placing *tulasi* beads around the neck. All

Vaishnavas in the Gaudiya school are obliged to follow at least this custom.

The *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* continues with a quote from the *Naradiya Purana*: "Vaishnavas can be recognized by the *tulasi* or lotus-seed necklace they wear, the vertical marks of *gopicandana* or sandalwood on their foreheads, and the signs of the conchshell and discus on their shoulders. Such Vaishnavas quickly purify the world." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 4.123)

The subsequent verse is similar in spirit: "I am the servant of one whose arms are marked with the symbols of Vishnu, whose power of speech is constantly used in glorifying the names of the Supreme Person, who wears the vertical tilak lines on his forehead, and a necklace of lotus seeds." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 4.124)

We should recognize that it has been said previously that even though someone may wear the symbols which are reminders of the Supreme Lord, if he acts in ways which go against the principles of devotion as outlined in the scriptures, even participating in sinful activities, then one should not consider him worthy of association. He should, however, be offered respect due to his having the external signs of a Vaishnava.

In the *Brahma Purana* it is said, "Anyone who does not offer respect to someone who is marked with the symbols of Krishna will lose the accumulated merit of 12 years of pious acts." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 4.98)

In the *Padma Purana*, the following statement is made about branding the symbols on the body: "One should purify himself by looking at the sun if he should ever see the face of an inferior human being who blasphemes a devotee tattooed with the symbols of Vishnu, such as the discus." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 15.40)

The hand signs made at certain times in the course of worship, which are also known as mudras, are not being indicated here in this injunction. These mudras have names such as *avahani* (used when calling the deity), *sthapini* (when seating him), *sannidhapani* (placing him closer), *dhenu* ("the cow"), *matsya* ("the fish"), *kurma* ("the tortoise"), *sankha* ("the conch"), *cakra* ("the discus"), *gada* ("the mace"), *padma* ("the lotus"), etc. In particular, there are sixteen such hand movements which are used at each stage of worship with sixteen elements (*sodasopacara*).

MORE DEVOTIONAL PRINCIPLES

- (32) to sing devotional songs;
- (33) to dance for the deity;³
- (34) to make auspicious sounds by blowing a conch to remind one of the Lord;
- (35) to put on dramatic performances of the Lord's pastimes;
- (36) to perform fire sacrifices according to the scriptural regulations;
- (37) to make food offerings to the deity;
- (38) to invite saintly persons and devotees into one's own home;
- (39) to perform puja;
- (40) to take the remnants of food offered to the deities and to the Vaishnavas;
- (41) to take the remnants of *pan* offered to the deity; [Gaudiya Vaishnavas have taken on the mood of Radharani in Her separation from Krishna after He has left for Mathura. In this spirit of separation, they are constantly seeking their Lord, praying, "Where is the lord of my life, the player of the flute?" In this mood of *vipralambha*, which was the example set by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Himself, Gaudiya Vaishnavas do not put *pan* into their mouths or swallow it, even though it is offered to Radha and Govinda as an element of their pastimes of union. Rather they place it on their heads in respect. One may offer *tambula* to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the awareness that He is the combined incarnation of both Radha and Krishna, but should not take and eat it afterwards, only offering it respect and worship as the remnants of the deity. The reason for this is that *tambula* is considered to be an aphrodisiac. Srimati Radharani, the daughter of King Vrsabhanu, is the incarnation of the highest aspect of divine emotion or *mahabhava*. She is the beloved of Krishna, the foremost of His lovers, and totally absorbed in Him; She enchants Him who bewilders even Cupid himself. She offers *pan* to Krishna in order to please Him by increasing His transcendental desire for love. Her only motivation in this is to please His senses. However, if someone pretends to accept *prasadi pan* without this kind of pure motivation, simply in order to increase one's capacity to please his own senses, this cannot be approved by those who seek to achieve pure devotional service. Beginners on the path of devotional practice are filled with contaminations and should not enter areas which lie outside their realm of

competence. They may pretend to be honoring *prasada'*, but the result, however, will be that their hidden desires for sense enjoyment will be awakened and they will become sensualists. For this reason, Gaudiya Vaishnavas do not eat *prasadi pan*, but venerate it by holding it to their heads. Of course, other kinds of *prasadi* foodstuffs can be eaten. But even there, Srila Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami has warned that:

jihvara lalase jeba iti uti dhaya sisnodara-parayana krsna nahi paya

"Someone who runs back and forth out of a desire to please his tongue becomes attached to his belly and genitals and does not attain Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.6.227)

(42) to associate with Vaishnavas [There are many scriptural quotes which illustrate the importance of such association, and these have been discussed in an earlier chapter];

(43) to inquire into particular aspects of duty, i.e., religious duties connected with devotional service;

(44) to follow the particular fasting rules governing the three days from Dasami to Dvadasi [According to *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, on Dasami and Dvadasi, one should eat only once at midday, taking *havisyanna*, a gruel without salt or spices. On Ekadasi, one should fast without taking even water. Alternatively one can take *anukalpa*, a token amount of non-grain *prasada*. One should be fixed in faithfully keeping one's vows on these three days, as long as one is in good health.]⁴;

(45) to observe the Vaishnava feasts and holy days and go on pilgrimages [Sanatana Gosvami comments that feasts and holy days include Janmastami, etc., while pilgrimage refers to visiting temples, etc. By extension, this injunction refers to making *tulasi* and flower gardens, etc.];

(46) to observe the eight special days [The eight special days (*vasarastakam*) are the eight great Dvadasis— Unmilani, Vyanjuli, Trisprsa, Paksavardhini, Jaya, Vijaya, Jayanti, Papanasini];

(47) to make the appropriate offerings of foodstuffs and service to the deity according to each season, if possible, in the royal style [Sanatana gives the example of the swing festival in the spring as a type of service appropriate to

that season];

(48) to follow all the special Vaishnava observances;

(49) to think of the spiritual master as God; [There are many verses which should be studied in connection with this idea. Some of them are:

saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastrair uktas tatha bhavyata eva sadbhih kintu prabhor yah priya eva tasya vande guroh sri-caranaravindam

"I worship the lotus feet of my spiritual master, who is said by all scriptures to be Lord Hari Himself, and is indeed thought of that way by all the saints. But this identity is due to his being very dear to the Lord." (Visvanatha Cakravarti's Gurvastakam, 7)

mukunda-presthatve smara param ajasram nanu manah

"O mind! Think of the guru as the one who is most dear to Mukunda." (Raghunatha dasa's Manahsiksha, 2)

acaryam mam vijaniyan navamanyeta karhicit na martya-buddhyasuyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruh

"Know the *guru* to be My very self and never disdain him. Never think of him as an ordinary man, for the *guru* is the sum total of all the demigods." (SrimadBhagavatam 11.17.27);

(50) to take care of the *tulasi* plant and daily collect her leaves;

(51) to serve the deity and *guru* by putting them to rest with foot massages and a proper bed to sleep on, etc.;

(52) at the time of going to bed to remember Rama and His entourage, for it is said,

ramam skandam hanumantam vainateyam vrkodaram sayane yah smaren nityam duhsvapnas tasya nasyati

"One who remembers Rama, Skanda, Hanuman, Garuda or Bhima before going to bed will never have nightmares." (Hari-bhakti-vilasa 11.155);

The Prohibitions From The Vishnu-yamala

These are the fifty-two rules which an initiated disciple is expected to follow. There are also fifty-two prohibitions listed in the same *Vishnu-yamala*. An initiated disciple is forbidden:

- (53) to sleep at dusk or dawn;
- (54) to go to the toilet without cleansing himself afterward with earth;
- (55) to perform *acamana* while standing;
- (56) to sit on the guru's seat;
- (57) to sit before the spiritual master with his legs spread out;
- (58) to step across the spiritual master's shadow;
- (59) to miss his morning bath as long as he is in good health—if ill, he should take bath mentally and then put on clean clothes;
- (60) to miss performing his daily worship of the deity—unless he is incapable;
- (61) to forget to awaken the deity and the spiritual master and to greet them in the morning;
- (62) to make a display of his learning before the spiritual master;
- (63) to sit on his hams before the spiritual master;⁵
- (64) to put tilak on without uttering the proper formula;
- (65) to do *acamana* without uttering the proper formula;
- (66) to wear a blue cloth;
- (67) to make friendship with non-devotees [As Narottama writes in *Premabhakti-candrika: karmi jnani micha bhakta na habe take anurakta*—"Do not place your affections in fruitive workers, impersonal philosophers, and false devotees"];

- (68) to read texts which do not teach devotional service;
- (69) to be attached to trivial matters and pleasures;
- (70) to eat meat or drink alcoholic beverages;
- (71) to take other intoxicating substances;
- (72) to eat red lentils (*masura*) and other foods in the mode of ignorance such as burnt rice, etc.;
- (73) to eat Saka, *tumbi*, or *kalanja*, etc.; [Saka here refers to certain kinds of leaves which adversely affect the eyesight, or bodily strength, in short any kind of vegetable that is bad for the health. Of course there are many other kinds of leaves such as *patola-saka*, *vastuka* or *betho saka*, *nalita* (spinach prepared from the leaves of the hemp plant) and other kinds of spinach which are allowed. *Vastuka* spinach was particularly dear to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. We follow Bhaktivinoda Thakura in daily singing:

gaura priya saka sevane jivana sarthaka mani

"I consider my life perfect when I eat the spinach which was so dear to Gaura."

sukta sakadi bhaji nalita kusmanda

"Yasoda serves *sukta*, various kinds of spinach, deep fried vegetables, jute spinach, and pumpkin."

Tumbi is also called *alambu* and is commonly known in Bengali as *lau*, in English, "bottle-gourd." What is being forbidden here are certain kinds of gourds such as the round *tumba*, the white *lau*, and the bitter gourd, and not every kind of pumpkin or squash. Mahaprabhu was particularly fond of a preparation made from *lau* and milk. On the evening before taking *sannyasa*, he ate the *lau* brought by His devotee Sridhara, which was cooked with milk by His mother, Saci.

The definition of *kalanja* is found in the Sanskrit dictionary *Sabda-kalpa-druma* as follows: *visastra-hata-mrga-paksinau*—"an animal or bird struck with a poison weapon, or the flesh of such a creature."⁶ It is also described as being dried meat. The words *na kalanjam bhaksayet* ("do not eat *kalanja*") are also

found in the *Upanishads*. Other scriptures also state that eating dried meat, having sexual relations with a woman older than oneself, the rays of the early morning sun, curds made with milk just given by the cow, sexual activity, and sleeping after sunrise all to vitiate the life energy. In the Treta and Dvapara Yugas, ksatriyas were permitted to eat the meat of animals which they had hunted themselves. In the Kali Yuga, however, there are several types of behavior known as the *kali-varjya* which are not permitted. These are five in number: the performance of the horse sacrifice (*asvamedha-yajna*), the cow-sacrifice (*go-medha yajna*), the renunciation of works (*karma-sannyasa*), making offerings of meat to the forefathers, and the custom of having one's younger brother sire offspring to maintain the family lineage (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.18.64).

asvamedham gavalambham sannyasam palapaitrkam devarena sutotpattim

The word "etc." in the original verse describing this rule is said by Sanatana Gosvami to mean eggplant. In the eighth chapter of *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, verses 64-65, there is another list of forbidden foods which includes things such as onions and garlic.

- (74) to take foodstuff offered by a nondevotee;
- (75) to follow any special observances related to gods other than Vishnu;
- (76) to chant any formula other than mantras of Vishnu;
- (77) to engage in any kind of black magic rites such as *marana* (meant to kill someone), *uccatana* (meant to cause someone distress), or *vasikarana* (to bring someone under one's thrall);
- (78) to worship the deity with inferior ingredients when he is capable of doing better;
- (79) to allow himself to be overcome by emotions such as grief;
- (80) to observe Ekadasi when it overlaps with Dasami;
- (81) to differentiate between the Ekadasi of the waxing fortnight and that of the waning fortnight; [in other words, fasting should be discarded on either Ekadasi should be observed without making any distinction].

- (82) to engage in illegal business practices or to gamble;
- (83) to eat fruits and such on a fast day if he is capable of fasting completely;
- (84) to perform the *sraddha* ceremony on Ekadasi;
- (85) to sleep during the day on Dvadasi;
- (86) to pick *tulasi* leaves on Dvadasi;
- (87) to avoid bathing Vishnu on Dvadasi;
- (88) to perform the *sraddha* ceremony with something other than Vishnu's prasada;
- (89) to perform *vrddhi-sraddha* (an offering to the progenitors on any prosperous occasion such as the birth of a son, etc.) without tulsi leaves;
- (90) to perform a *sraddha* ceremony with a non-Vaishnava priest [to which Sanatana adds, "where there are no Vaishnavas present, or where something other than Vishnu's *prasada* is used to make the oblations"];]
- (91) to use other water to purify himself with *acamana* after having drunk *caranamrta*;
- (92) to worship the Lord while sitting on a wooden seat [One may do so as long as he is not sitting directly on the wood, i.e., on a piece of cloth spread over the wood.];
- (93) to engage in useless conversation while performing the deity's worship or puja;
- (94) to worship with the oleander⁷ and other poisonous flowers like the milkweed (*calotropis gigantea*);
- (95) to use iron implements in worship;
- (96) to wear horizontal tilak like the Saivites;
- (97) to use any impure or unwashed item in worshipping the deity, or to worship with an unattentive mind;

- (98) to pay obeisances with only one hand or to circumambulate only one time;
- (99) to offer the deity leftover foodstuffs or foodstuffs which have been contaminated by the touch of leftovers;
- (100) to chant the mantra without counting the number of times one does so [The mantra being referred to here is the one which has a seed syllable and contains the word *svaha* or *namah* and has been given by the spiritual master. The regulation is that one should always chant the mantra a fixed number of times daily. This does not apply to the *Maha-mantra* (Hare Krishna) which can either be chanted on beads according to a fixed number or aloud without counting.];
- (101) to reveal his mantra to anyone;
- (102) due to engaging in some sinful act, to miss the principal occasions for the performance of devotional acts, or
- (103) to engage in the performance of religious acts at times other than prescribed;
- (104) to show reluctance to take Vishnu *prasada*.

The Initiation Ceremony

All Vaishnavas should be careful to avoid engaging in any of these prohibited acts. Before giving initiation, the guru should instruct a prospective disciple in these fifty-two prescriptions and fifty-two prohibitions. The disciple should accept each one of these injunctions by saying *badham*, or "I accept." When the disciple has agreed to do everything, the guru should make him perform the ceremony of the lights and then worship the deity. When he has done so, the guru can whisper the mantra into his right ear.

angikare krte badham tan-nirajana-purvakam deva-pujam karayitva daksakarne mantram japet

"After being so initiated, the disciple, now completely fulfilled, should rise and then prostrate himself before the spiritual master, placing his head on the guru's feet for as long as he is permitted. Then asking him for his blessings, the disciple

should give the guru gifts to the limit of his capacity." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 2.179)

After worshipping his spiritual master, he should go on to worship the other Vaishnavas according to his capacity and then feed them all. After receiving the blessings of the guru and the Vaishnavas, he should take their permission and then sit down himself and eat along with his family and friends. The fortunate person who follows this scriptural procedure for initiation will certainly live a long and blessed life, fulfilling all his dreams.

All the paraphernalia, such as a waterpot which has been used in performing the initiation rituals, should be respectfully offered to the spiritual master as gifts (*daksina*), even if he does not request they be given him. The guru will likely ask for nothing more of his student than that he honor his teachings. Nevertheless, the disciple should not demonstrate miserliness, but rather present the guru with appropriate gifts of land, cows, clothing, gold, or whatever is within his power. He should also seek to satisfy the guru's wife and children with presents such as gold ornaments. However, if a poor disciple can do nothing more than offer himself with heartfelt sincerity, the spiritual master will be content.

Scholars of the scriptures have given the name *diksa* to the process by which a living entity gains divine knowledge and, abandoning the happiness that comes from the pushing and pulling of temporal sense objects, enters into the search for eternal devotion to Lord Krishna. The secondary result of this process is that all his tendencies to sin are completely eliminated. The spiritual master's real satisfaction comes from seeing the disciple's sincere effort to engage in devotional service without any aspiration to worldly enjoyments, liberation or yogic powers. This attitude is called *thejnana-sandesa-daksina*, or "the gift of the sincere search for knowledge." False teachers seek service, fame, wealth, and other gains from their disciples, while a real guru is happy simply to see his disciple's increasing desire for worshipping the Lord.

After giving the mantra to his disciple, the spiritual master should himself chant it 1,008 times in order to preserve his own ability to experience the mantra's power (*sastam sahasram tan-mantram sva-sakty-aksataye japet—Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 2.181).

CHAPTER 9 Diksa Mantra And The Holy Name

On Sunday, the third of December, 1967, an intriguing news item appeared in the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, an important Calcutta newspaper. The headline read, "Miracles Still Happening Today." The story had been sent in on the previous day by a staff reporter from Alipore Dwar, who wrote:

"The youngest son of Kulup Chandra Das of the Chekmari area of Madari Hat was bitten by a snake. Many ayurvedic doctors and exorcists were called in to no avail. Finally an allopathic doctor came and declared the poisoned child to be dead. Even so, his parents wanted to see if there was some last chance at saving their son. They had heard of a small community of exorcists, or *ojhas*, who lived near the village of Bogribari Hat, located between Phalakata and Jateshwar, and who apparently knew how to cure snakebites.

"One of these *ojhas* came to Chekmari and, after chanting a spell over three small shells, sent them off to find the snake that had bitten the child. Under the effects of the spell, the snake came out of its hiding place and slithered into Kulup Das' home. The three shells over which the *ojha* had recited his incantation over were stuck to the snake's head, back and tail.

"For an entire day and night, the snake sucked the poison out of the body of Kulup Das's son from the same spot where it had bitten him. Then suddenly, the child's body rose from the dead. Thousands of people witnessed this event."

The reporter did not mention when all this took place, but this is not the only incident of its kind. The amazing power of such mantras or spells can still be seen today working in various different areas of life. In my home village of Ganganandapur in Jessore district, there was a leather worker named Haripada Muchi who was a very good *ojha* who also knew how to cure snakebites by incantations of this sort. He once told me, "Unless one has complete faith in the guru and the mantra he has given, he will never directly experience its potency."

There are numerous spells that work against ghostly possession or snakebite. Even though these spells may be in a vulgar dialect and call on the power of some lower god, they are still seen to be remarkably effective. If such mantras

are seen to produce results, then we should inquire into the reason why the powerful mantras of six, eight, 10, 12, 18, or 32 syllables, sanctified by the presence of the seed syllable and the words of surrender (*svaha or namah*) do not reveal their innate potencies, even when they have come down in a pure disciplic succession. Perhaps we should consider the leather worker from Ganganandapur's insight, for he has clearly divined the reason for our failure.

The Potency Of Vishnu-mantras

The Supreme Lord's *saktyavesa* avatar Vedavyasa hinted at the same thing many centuries ago in his *Padma Purana*:

*arceye visnau sila-dhir gurusu nara-matir vaisnave jati-buddhir visnor va
vaisnavanam kali-mala-mathane pada-tirtha 'mbu-buddhih sri-visnor namni
mantra sakala-kalusa-he sabda-samanya-buddhir visnau sarvesvarese tad-itara-
sama-dhir yasya va naraki sah*

"One who thinks the deity in the temple to be made of wood or stone; who thinks of the spiritual master in the disciplic succession as an ordinary man; who thinks a Vaishnava of the infallible Lord's own clan belongs to a certain caste or creed; who thinks of *caranamrta* or Ganges water as ordinary water; who considers the mantra composed of the names of the Lord, which destroys all sins, to be a set of ordinary words; or who considers the Supreme Lord of all lords, Vishnu, to be equal to an ordinary human being—is taken to be a resident of hell."

Any mantra which reveals the sweetness of the Supreme Lord as manifest in Vrindavan is to be considered superior because this form is superior to all other forms of the Lord, such as the one He reveals in Dvaraka. The 18-syllable mantra named *sammohana* is precisely such a mantra; indeed, it is considered to be the king of all mantras. The *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* has cited many scriptures, including the *Gopala-tapini Upanishad*, the *Trailohya-sammohana-tantra*, and the *Sanat-kumara-kalpa*, all of which attest to the superexcellence of this mantra.

The *Bhagavata* states that all the different portions and plenary portions of the Lord emanate from Krishna, who is the Supreme Lord Himself. Therefore, just as Krishna is clearly the Supreme Person above all the other manifestations of the Godhead, so too is His mantra supreme above all other mantras. Since

Krishna's lila in Vrindavan, with its qualities of sweetness and munificence, is superior to the Lord's other pastimes, the mantra that contains that lila and reveals it, namely the 18-syllable mantra, is supreme among them all.

In the *Trailokya-sammohana-tantra*, Mahadeva himself glorifies this mantra to his consort Bhagavati Devi:

*yatha cintamani srestho yatha gaus ca yatha sati yatha dvijo yatha ganga
tathasau mantra uttamah yathavad akhila-srestham yatha sastram tu
vaisnavam yatha susamskrta vani tathasau mantra uttamah ato maya suresani
pratyaham japyate manuh naitena sadrsah kascidjagaty asmin caracare*

"Just as the philosopher's stone is the best of all jewels, just as the cow is the best of all beasts, just as Sati is the best among women, just as the brahmin is the best of human beings, and just as the Ganges is the best among rivers, so too is this mantra the best of all mantras. Just as the Vaishnava scriptures are the best among all spiritual teachings, and just as Sanskrit is supreme among languages, so too is this the best of all mantras. Therefore, O queen of the goddesses, I daily chant this mantra. There is nothing like it in the entire universe." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 1.185-6)

The *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* also quotes the *Sanat-kumara-kalpa*, which says, "By the grace of this mantra, Indra easily attained his position as king of the demigods. Due to his bad luck, Indra was cursed by Durvasa, but again, through the power of this mantra, he was reinstated to his position." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 1.190-1)

It is so powerful that it does not depend on *purascarana* or any other kind of customary ritual performance to enhance it. Simply by reciting the mantra, one can attain the desired result.

*bahuna kim ihoktena purascarana-sadhanaih vinapi japa-matrena labhate
sarvam ipsitam*

"What is the use of all these instructions? Simply by chanting this mantra, even without the strict restrictions of the *purascarana vrata*, one can obtain everything one wishes."

(*Sanat-kumara-kalpa*, quoted in *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 1.192)

Purascarana

Ordinarily, there are various purifying procedures (*samskaras*) that are prescribed before an initiation in order to purify the mantra and fully invest it with power. According to *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, these are ten in number: *janana, jivana, tadana, rodhana, abhiseka, vimalikarana, apyayana, tarpana, dipana* and *gopana*.¹ However, Krishna mantras in general are so powerful that there is no necessity for these *samskaras*: *balitvat krsna-mantranam samskarapeksanam na hi (Hari-bhakti-vilasa 1.235)*.

Even though such *samskaras* are deemed unnecessary, the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* does give an extensive description of the *purascarana* observance in its seventeenth chapter, or *vilasa*. *Purascarana* is defined as follows in the *Agastya-samhita*:

*puja traikaliki nityarh japas tarpanam eva ca homa brahmana-bhuktis
ca purascaranam ucyate*

"There are five aspects to the *purascarana* observance: puja three times a day, constant chanting of *japa*, oblations of water, daily fire sacrifice and feeding the brahmins." (*Hari-*

bhakti-vilasa 17.11)

According to these directions, one should surrender to the guru, to Gaurariga, and to Radha-Krishna, performing a puja with the 16 ingredients. Then, taking the permission of the spiritual master, at the auspicious moment, one should start reciting the mantra. There is a specific mantra that the devotee should utter as a commitment to completing the vow:

*adyastadasaksara-sammohana-mantrasya siddhi-kama iyat-sankhya-japa-tad
dasamsamukadravyaka-homa-tad-dasamsamsamuka-tarpana-tad-dasamsa-
brah-mana-bhojanatmaka-purascaranam karisye.*²

"Starting today, I will perform a *purascarana* for the sake of achieving perfection in the 18-syllabled *Sammohana-mantra*. Each day, I will chant a specified number of mantras. I will offer one tenth that many oblations of (object to be specified) into the fire sacrifice. I will perform one tenth that many oblations of holy water and will feed one tenth that number of brahmins."

In other words, if one decides to chant the mantra 20,000 times, 2,000 oblations into the sacrificial fire must be offered, 200 oblations of water made and 20

brahmins fed. To perform such an elaborate ceremony in full consciousness is not easily accomplished by people in this day and age, whose minds are flickering. In view of this, the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* has provided a shorter version of the *purascarana* based on the faithful service to the guru. This section of the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* is reproduced here for the special attention of the *sadhaka*.

The Shorter Version Or Purascarana

tato mantra-prasiddhy-artham gunah sampujya tosayet evam ca mantra-siddhih syat devata ca prasidati

"In order to achieve the perfection of the mantra one should satisfy the guru with appropriate acts of worship. By so doing, not only will one achieve the goal of perfecting the mantra, but the deity will also be pleased with him." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 17.238)

athava devata-rupam gurum dhyatva pratosayet tasya cchayanusari syad bhakti-yuktena cetasa guru-mulam idam sarvam tasman nityam gururh bhajet purascarana-hino 'pi mantri siddhyen na samsayah

"Alternatively, one should satisfy the guru by meditating on him as the form of the deity. One should think of oneself as devotedly following the guru like a shadow. One should constantly worship the guru, who is the basis of all of one's spiritual activities. Even if one does not perform the *purascarana* one can attain perfection in chanting the mantra through service to the guru. Of this there can be no doubt."

yatha siddha-rasa-sparsat tamram bhavati kancanam sannidhanad guror eva sisyo visnumayo bhavet

For as it is said, "Just as copper becomes gold through the touch of specially treated mercury, so the disciple takes on the qualities of Vishnu through the association of his guru." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 17.241 -243)

In his commentary on *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 17.241, Sanatana Gosvami further states, "Simply through the grace of the spiritual master, the perfection of *purascarana* can be achieved." (*kevala-sri-guru-prasadenaivapurascarana-siddhih syat*).

According to the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, one should chant the mantra after

worshiping the deity with puja three times a day. Failing that, one should do it twice a day, or at least once. If the *sadhaka* lives in the same village as the guru he should go daily to pay homage to him. One should always associate with devotees, etc."

*yasya deve ca mantrē ca gurau trisv api niscalā na vyavacchidyate
buddhis tasya siddhir aduratah mantratma devata jneya devata guru-
rupini tesam bhedo na kartavyo yadicched istam atmanah*

"One is not far from perfection if his intelligence is fixed unwaveringly in the deity, the mantra and the guru. The soul of the mantra is the deity. The deity is manifest in the form of the guru. One should not make a distinction between these three if he wishes to obtain the heart's desire." (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 17.65-66)

In the seventh canto of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* it is similarly stated that one obtains the grace of the Lord through faithful and devoted service to the guru. Krishna said the same thing to His friend Sudama Vipra:

*naham ijya-prajatibhyam tapasopasamena ca tusyeyam sarva-bhutatma guru-
susrusaya yatha*

"I, the soul of all beings, am not as pleased by the performance of the prescribed duties of the four *asramas* (i.e., sacrifices, service to the family, austerities and renunciation) as I am by service to the guru." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 10.80.34)

Even though we have obtained such a powerful mantra from Sri Gurudeva, due to our lack of steadfastness and our inability to receive the mercy of the spiritual master, we are not able to perceive the great potency that lies dormant within the mantra. We saw from the newspaper story earlier in this chapter that even a non-brahmin who did not follow the fundamental regulative principles of spiritual life was still able to recite a mantra with such potency that the three shells attacked a snake's body and brought it out of a dense jungle, forcing it to return to the house where it had bitten a child and then made it counteract its own bite. Should then those who have received the mantra in a pure disciplic succession be unable to perceive the power which lies within it? Of course not.

Devotion has the power to attract Sri Krishna Himself. By the grace of Krishna's internal potency, Srimati Radharani, one can expect to receive the grace of the goddess of devotion. Through the grace of the guru, who is non-different from

Srimati Radharani, one can directly experience the Lord's statement: "through devotion alone one can know Me" (*bhaktyaham ekaya grahyah, bhaktya mam abhijanati*).

The Distinction Between The Mantra And The Holy Name

In His instructions to Prakasananda Sarasvati, Mahaprabhu made the following distinction between the mantra (the initiation mantra) and the Holy Name (also called the *Maha-mantra*):

krsna-mantra haite habe samsara-mocana krsna-nama haite pabe krsnera carana

"By chanting the Krishna mantra one will be liberated from material existence. And by chanting Krishna's name, one will attain His lotus feet." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.73)

This world is based on the principle of accepting and rejecting sense objects. One who fixes his mind on the mantra is liberated from such entanglement. Then, by chanting the Holy Names in *sankirtana*, one obtains direct service to the Lord's lotus feet.

krsna-nama-maha-mantrera ei to svabhava je jape tara krsne upajaya bhava

"The nature of the *Maha-mantra* of Krishna's names is such that whoever chants it develops feeling for Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.83)

krsna-namera phala prema sarva-sastre kaya

"All scriptures say that the fruit of chanting the Holy Names is to develop love for Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.86)

The Lord Himself stated that all perfections will come by the grace of the Holy Name (*iha haite sarva siddhi haibe sabara*). But most importantly, the fifth and ultimate goal of human life, love for Krishna, arises from the chanting of the Lord's names:

krsna-visayaka prema parama purusartha jam age trna-tulya cari purusartha pancama purusartha premanandamrta-sindhu moksadi ananda jara nahe eka bindu

"Love for Krishna is the supreme goal of human life, or *purusartha*. The other four goals of life are insignificant in comparison to it. This fifth goal of life, *prema*, is like an ocean of

ecstatic nectar. In comparison, the joys derived from *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksa* are nothing more than a drop of water." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.84-5)

All these quotations from the scriptures show that the ultimate achievement of the devotee who takes shelter of the Holy Name is love for Krishna, or *prema*. "In their heart of hearts, saintly persons constantly behold the inconceivably beautiful blackish form of the son of Yasoda, Krishna, and His inconceivable innumerable attributes, with the eye of devotion tinged with the salve of love."³

The Pancaratra And Bhagavata Approaches To Devotional Service

The Supreme Lord, the son of the king of Vraja, is influenced only by the love of a devotee, whose sole desire is to bring pleasure to His transcendental senses. However, due to the very fact that people possess material bodies, they are generally engaged in sinful activities and their minds are disturbed. In the *Pancaratrika* school, importance has been given to deity worship, preceded by initiation in the mantra, in order to diminish these characteristics. However, the ultimate goal of pure devotion is described in the same fashion both in the *Pancaratra* literature and the *Bhagavatam*. Thus, on the one hand, in the *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*, the essence of the *Bhagavatam* is summarized in the following way by Rupa Gosvami:

anyabhilasita-sunyam jnana- karmady-anavrtam anukulyena krsnanu-silanam bhaktir uttama

"The highest category of devotion, bhakti, is defined as the culture of a favorable attitude toward Krishna, devoid of all material desires and without any adulteration by monistic philosophy or fruitive action." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.1.11, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.19.167)

This is translated by Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami as follows: *anya-vancha anya-puja chan jnana karma anukulye sarvendriye krsnanusllana*

"A devotee must engage all the senses in the cultivation of favorable Krishna consciousness. He must give up all other desires, the worship of other gods, the

cultivation of monistic knowledge and fruitive activities." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.19.168)

But Rupa goes on to support this definition of bhakti with a verse from the *Narada-pancaratra*:

sarvopadhi-vinirmuktam tat-paratvena nirmalam hrsikena hrsikesa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate

"Bhakti is defined as the engagement of the senses in the service of the proprietor of the senses. This service is to be free from any contamination from identification with the body, and pure through being exclusively fixed on Me." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.1.12; *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.19.170)

Here the primary characteristic of devotion is the engagement of the senses in the service of the Lord of the senses. This devotion has two characteristics that are considered secondary, that is, dependent on its proper execution. The first is that it should be free from any *upadhi*, or identification with selfish bodily interests. The second is that it will be purified due to being absolutely fixed on Him alone. Thus the two definitions are parallel to one another.

From this practice of the *abhidheya* of bhakti, one arrives at the ultimate goal—the *prayojana* — of *prema*.

ei suddha-bhakti iha haite prema haya pancaratre bhagavate ei laksana kaya

"These activities are called *suddha-bhakti*, pure devotional service. In the rendering of such pure devotional service, one's original love for Krishna develops in due course of time. Its characteristics have been described in the *Pancaratra*s and *Srimad Bhagavatam*." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.19.169)

Thus, though the characteristics of pure devotional service are identical according to both those on the *Pancaratra* and *Bhagavata* paths, each path exhibits some differences in its most prominent practices. The chanting of the mantra and deity worship are associated with the *Pancaratrika* system and the Dvapara Yuga, while the chanting of the Holy Names is an ecstatic practice associated with the *Bhagavatas* and is particularly appropriate in the age of Kali. This is confirmed by Madhvacharya in the following verse found in his commentary on the *Mandukya Upanishad*:

*dvapariyairjanair visnuh pancaratrais ca kevalam kalau tu nama-
matrena pujiyate bhagavan harih*

"The Supreme Lord Vishnu was worshiped according to the *Pancaratrika* method alone in the Dvapara; in the age of Kali, He is worshiped exclusively by the Holy Name."

The Importance Of Chanting The Holy Names

There are many verses in the *Bhagavatam* that attest to the preeminence of the three principal devotional activities of hearing, chanting, and remembering:

*tasmad ekena manasd bhagavan satvatam patih srotavyah kirtitavyas
ca dhyeyah pujiyas ca nityadd*

"Therefore, one should constantly hear about, glorify, meditate on, and worship the Supreme Lord, the protector of the devotees, with single-minded concentration." (1.12.14)

*tasmat sarvatmana rajan harih sarvatra sarvada srotavyah kirtitavyas
ca smartavyo bhagavan nrnam*

"Therefore, O King, wherever one may be, the Supreme Lord Hari should always be spoken about, glorified and remembered with full concentration." (2.2.36)

*tasmad bharata sarvatmd bhagavan isvaro harih srotavyah kirtitavyas
ca smartavyas cecchatabhayam*

"O scion of the Bharata dynasty! One who desires fearlessness should hear about, glorify and also remember the Supreme Lord Hari, the soul of all beings and supreme controller, for He alone steals away all one's miseries." (2.1.5)

In the final analysis however, despite the emphasis on these three types of devotional activity, *kirtana*, glorifying the Lord or chanting His names, is singled out as supreme by the *Bhagavatam*:

*etan nirvidyamananam icchatam akuto-bhayam yoginam nrpa nirnitam harer
namanukirtanam*

"O King, it has been ascertained that for those yogis who are indifferent to material pleasures and who desire complete fearlessness, the best path is constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord." (2.2.36)

nama-sankirtanam yasya sarva-papa-pranasanam pranamo dukha-samanas tam namami harim param

"I bow down to the Supreme Lord Hari, the chanting of whose name results in the destruction of all sin, and by paying homage to whom, all miseries are quieted." (12.13.23)

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also confirmed these statements from the *Bhagavatam* in His own words:

bhajanera madhye srestha nava-vidha bhakti krsna-prema, krsna dite dhare maha-sakti tara madhye sarva-srestha nama-sankirtana niraparadhe laile nama paya prema-dhana

"Of the many ways of executing devotional service, there are nine varieties that are considered to be the best, for they possess a great capacity to deliver love for Krishna and thus Krishna Himself. Of these nine processes of devotional service, the most important is the chanting of the Lord's holy name, for in chanting offenselessly, one will obtain the treasure of love for the Lord."

(*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.4.70-1)

eka krsna-name hare sarva-papa ksaya nava-vidha bhaktipurna nama haite haya

"Simply by chanting the holy name of Krishna, one is relieved from all the reactions of a sinful life. One can complete the nine processes of devotional service simply by chanting the Holy Name." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.15.107)

In the twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita*, it is said that remembering, contemplating and meditating on the Lord are dependent on inner purification and therefore not easily perfected by ordinary people. On the other hand, since *sankirtana* is an activity executed by the external senses, it is within the grasp of anyone, even the disturbed human beings of this age of Kali.

The sixth canto of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, states that *bhakti*, or devotional

service, is primarily executed in the form of *sankirtana*:

*etavan eva loke 'smin pumsam dharmah parah smrtah bhakti-yogo
bhagavati tan-nama-grahanadibhih*

"Therefore, the supreme religious activity for people in this world is devotional service to the Lord, performed by such acts as repeating His divine names."
(6.3.22)

The definition of *kirtana* has been given in the *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* (1.2.145) as "the audible glorification of the Lord's names, attributes, and activities, etc." (*nama-lila-gunadmam uccair bhasanam tu kirtanam*). Even so, the best type of *kirtana*, also spoken of in the *Bhagavatam* and taught by the Gosvamis like Sri Sanatana, Sri Rupa, and Sri Jiva, is the chanting of the Holy Name. This is the religious principle of the age of Kali as promulgated by the incarnation of Krishna, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

The Chanting Of The Holy Names Is The Religious Process For This Age

Mahaprabhu and all His associates clearly stated that among all the devotional practices, the chanting of the Holy Names is the most important. *Harinama-sankirtana* has nothing other than love for Krishna as its goal, or intended result. Religiosity, material prosperity, sense enjoyment and liberation are not to be sought through the chanting of the Holy Name. In the age of Kali, the Holy Name is the essence of all religious activity and the essence of all mantras. There are many statements in the scriptures that support this idea:

nama vina kali-kale nahi ara dharmas sarva-mantra-sara nama ei sastra marma

"In the age of Kali, there is no religious activity other than the chanting of the Holy Names. The Holy Name is the essence of all mantras." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.74)

A number of verses from the last book of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, also emphasize the chanting of the Holy Names in the age of Kali.

*kaler dosa-nidhe rajann asti hy eko mahan gunah kirtanad eva krsnasya mukta-
sarigah param vrajet*

"O king! The age of Kali is an ocean of faults, but it contains one great virtue:

simply by chanting the names of Krishna one becomes liberated and goes to the supreme abode." (Srlmad Bhagavatam 12.3.51)

krte yad dhyayato visnum tretayam yajato makhaih dvapare paricaryayam kalau tadd hari-kirtanat

"That which is achieved in the Satya Yuga by meditation on Vishnu, in the Treta-yuga by performing fire sacrifices, and in Dvapara Yuga by deity worship, is attained in Kali Yuga by chanting the name and glories of Hari." (SB 12.3.52)

Narada Muni, the seer of the gods, clearly stated that, in the age of Kali, there is no other means of attaining perfection:

harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatir anyatha

"In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the Holy Names of the Lord. There is no other way, there is no other way, there is no other way." (*Brhan-naradiya Purana, Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.76)

Mahaprabhu Himself explained this verse to Prakasananda Sarasvati:

kali-kale nama-rupe krsna-avatara nama haite haya sarva-jagat-nistara dardhya lag harer nama-ukti tina-vara jada loka bujhaite punah eva-kara kevala-sabde punarapi niscaya-karana jnana-yoga-tapa-karma-adi nivarana anyatha je mane tara nahika nistara nahi nahi nahi e tina eva-kara

"In this Age of Kali, Krishna has incarnated in the form of His Holy Name, the Hare Krishna *Maha-mantra*. The whole world will be delivered through the grace of the Holy Name. In order to vigorously affirm this, Narada's verse repeats the words *harer nama* three times. Then, just to make it clear for the really dull, it stresses those words with the word *eva* ['certainly']. This assertion is further strengthened by the use of the word *kevala* ['alone'] which prohibits all other processes, such as cultivation of knowledge, practice of mystic yoga, and performance of austerities and fruitive activities. Then, to make sure it is clear that one who disregards this teaching will not achieve salvation, the words 'there is no other way' are repeated thrice." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.17.22-5)

The importance of the *Maha-mantra* for the age of Kali has also been

emphasized in the *Kali-santarana Upanishad*:

hare krishna hare krishna krishna krishna hare hare hare rama hare rama rama rama hare hare

iti sodasakam namnam kali-kalmasa-nasanam natah parataropayah sarva-vedesu drsyate

"The 16 names of the *Maha-mantra* destroy the pollution of this age of Kali. Throughout the entire body of Vedic literature one cannot find a more sublime means of spiritual religion."

Mahaprabhu Appeared To Preach The Chanting Of The Holy Names

avatari caitanya kaila dharma-pracarana kali-kale dharma krsna-nama-sankirtana sankirtana-yajne tarire kare aradhana sei ta sumedha ara kali-hatajana

"Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu descended to preach religious principles. In the age of Kali, the only religious principle is the chanting of the holy names of Lord Krishna. Anyone who worships the Lord by the sacrifice of the Holy Name is most intelligent. As for the rest, they have been defeated by the spirit of the age of quarrel." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.11.98-9)

The significance of Mahaprabhu's appearance to teach the Holy Names is furthermore underlined by the *Srimad Bhagavatam*:

krsna-varnam tvisakrsnam sangopangastra-parsadam yajnaih sarikirtana-prayair yajanti hi su-medhasah

"In the Age of Kali, the golden Lord, upon whose lips the name of Krishna always remains, appears in the company of His expansions, portions, weapons and associates. Those who are very intelligent will worship him through the sacrifice of congregational glorification (*sahkirtana-yajna*)." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.5.32)

Mahaprabhu had the further purpose of bestowing the most elevated and effulgent kind of spiritual experience to all the world. One day, as He was thinking how the living beings of the world could be made eligible to enter this experience, He put His arms around Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Raya,

His closest companions, and said in great jubilation:

harse prabhu kahena suna svarupa-rama-raya nama-sankirtana kalau parama upaya sankirtana-yajne kalau krsna-aradhana sei ta sumedha paya krsnera carana nama-sankirtana haite sarvanartha-nasa sarva-subhodaya, krsna-premera ullasa

"My dear Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Raya, know from Me that chanting of the Holy Names is the most feasible means of salvation in this age of Kali. In this age, the process of worshiping Krishna is to perform sacrifice by chanting the holy name of the Lord. One who does so is certainly very intelligent, attaining shelter at the lotus feet of Krishna. Simply by chanting the holy name of Lord Krishna, one can be freed from all undesirable habits. This is the means of awakening all good fortune and initiating the flow of waves of love for Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.20.8-9,11)

From this statement we can easily understand that the Lord invested some special powers in the chanting of His holy names in this fortunate age of Kali. This special power is its capacity to awaken affectionate attachment, or *raga*, for the Lord. Therefore, this is the best process by which one can develop *raga-bhakti*, or devotional service in spontaneous affection.

Ways Of Chanting

The scriptures ordinarily describe three styles of chanting mantras: the *vacika*, or vocal chanting; the *upamsu*, chanting in a whisper such that it can only be heard by oneself; the *manasa*, in which one chants mentally. Each of these is said to be superior to the one which precedes it. Nevertheless, a mantra is *japya*, uttered or recited silently, only when one tries to fulfill the obligation of chanting it a certain number of times. Generally, we don't encounter scriptural injunctions that direct us to chant a mantra while keeping track of the number of times it is chanted. In the case of the *Maha-mantra*, this particular distinction is not made either. One can chant both within the constraints of a vow to chant a certain daily amount or outside of such constraints. There are no restrictions in this matter, just as there are none concerning the appropriate times of day to chant, or the state of one's purification. Mahaprabhu Himself says as much in His Siksastaka:

niyamitah smarane na kalah.

ki bhojane ki sayane kiba jagarane aharnisa

cinta krsna balaha vadane

"Think of Krishna and utter His names both day and night, whether you are eating, lying down or engaged in waking activities."

sarva ksana bala ithe vidhi nahi ara

"The only rule is to chant the Holy Name always. There is no other requirement." Elsewhere it is said,

na desa-niyamas tatra na kala-niyamas tatha nocchistadau nimeso'sti sri-harer namni lubdhaka

"O hunter! There are no rules governing the time or place where one may chant the holy name of the Lord. Nor is it necessary for one to be in a state of ritual purity. One can chant even if one's hands or mouth are unwashed after eating, sleeping, or going to the toilet."

We must remember the 16 names and 32 syllables of the Hare Krishna mantra are called the *Maha-mantra* and they are especially powerful.

krsna-nama maha-mantrera ei ta svabhava jei jape tara krsne upajaye bhava

"This is the nature of the *Maha-mantra* consisting of Krishna's names. Whoever recites it develops ecstatic feeling for Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.83)

In the *Anubhasya* to this verse, Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura has written the following:

"Some foolish people do not understand that the formula consisting of 16 names and 32 syllables is the *Maha-mantra*. Taking it to be another ordinary mantra that should be uttered silently or mentally, they artificially claim it should not be chanted aloud or sung. Those who have attained love for Krishna engage in loud chanting of these names in the company of other devotees. Through such singing of the *Maha-mantra*, everyone in the world is initiated in the Holy Name. Anyone who sings the Names aloud will simultaneously hear and remember the Name. Because Krishna and His name are not different from each other, a tendency to serve the Lord will awaken in anyone who recites His names

in *japa*. Someone who has attained the stage of *bhava* is no longer polluted by the contaminations resulting from bondage in ignorance. Their personal relationship with the Lord has been awakened within them and therefore they relish the combination of ingredients that go into the composition of divine mellows, or *rasa*. As this stage of ecstatic feeling, or *bhava*, intensifies, it becomes *prema*. The 16 names and 32-syllable formula consisting of Krishna's names is the most potent; all the other mantras listed in the *Pancaratra* literature are considered to be less effective. The holy names of the Lord are known as the *Maha-mantra*."

diksa purascarya vidhi apeksa na kare jihva sparse acandale sabare uddhare

"All perfections come from the Holy Name. It does not require initiation or the observance of *purascarana*. As soon as it touches the tongue of even the lowest class of humankind, it immediately delivers them." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.15.108)

All these statements show that the *Maha-mantra* of the Holy Names is more powerful than any other mantra, including the 18-syllable Gopala mantra. One who has initiation in the mantra is given the right to practice the *vidhi-marga*, whereas someone who chants the *Maha-mantra*, whether initiated or not, is given the qualifications for all situations in life. In particular, a practitioner of the *raganuga* path quickly attains his desired goal in Vraja by taking shelter of the worship of the Holy Name. For one on the *vidhi-marga* or *arcana-marga*, the ecstatic mood of Vraja is vague and distant. Spiritual practices on the *vidhi-marga* have no power to bestow this mood. *Vidhi-marge vraja-bhava paite nahi sakti*.

If The Name Is So Powerful, Then Why Do We Need Initiation?

Jiva Gosvami responds to the question of why the mantra and initiation are necessary if the Holy Name has such purificatory power. The following paragraph is found in his *Bhakti-sandarbha* (285):

"Now you may say, The mantra itself consists of names of the Lord. Added to that are words indicating submission, such as *namah* or *svaha*, etc., through which Narada and other seers have endowed the mantra with some special potency by the desire of the Lord. Furthermore they are capable of awakening a specific personal relationship with the Lord. [Of all these constituents] of the

mantra, the names of the Lord alone are capable of independently giving its reciter the supreme goal of life [i.e., *prema*]. Thus we find that in the mantra there is an even greater power than can be found in the Name. In view of all these considerations, why then is there any necessity for initiation?"

"The answer is as follows: there is no fundamental necessity for initiation. Nevertheless, because people are generally by nature caught up in bad habits and are unable to concentrate due to bodily associations, etc., the great seers such as Narada and others have on occasion established some fundamental regulations here and there calling for the performance of worship of the deity (*arcana-marga*) in order to reduce such bad habits and lack of concentration. For this reason, the scriptures call for the performance of penances as an atonement for the non-performance of such deity worship. Where neither of these faults (bodily and mental aberrations) are prominent, there is no need for initiation."⁴

Srila Prabhupada further clarifies this distinction by writing the following: "The conditioned soul absolutely must achieve perfection in the mantra in order to rid himself of his material ego and his tendency for sense gratification. The word *namah* is interpreted as follows: *ma* means *ahankara*; *na* negates this egoism. Through perfecting the chanting of the mantra (*mantra-siddhi*) one gains direct experience of the transcendent reality. Thus Sri Rupa Gosvami sings in his *Namastakam*, addressing the Holy Name as follows: *ayi mukta-kulair upasyamanam*—"O Holy Name! You are worshiped by the liberated souls."
(*Anubhasya* 1.7.72-4)

The Mantra Brings Purification — The Holy Name Brings Ecstatic Love:

We have already seen that Mahaprabhu gave instructions about the Holy Name and the mantra to the Mayavadi sannyasi, Prakasananda Sarasvati, when in Kasi. Prakasananda criticized the Lord, saying that chanting the Holy Name was not a suitable activity for a person in the renounced order of life. In response, the Lord said:

*prabhu kahe suna sripada ihara karana guru more murkha dekhi karila
sasana murkha tumi, tomara nahika vedantadhikara krsna-mantra japa sada ei
mantra-sara krsna-mantra haite habe samsara-mocana krsna-nama haite pabe
krsnera carana nama vinu kali-kale nahi ara dharma sarva-mantra-sara nama
ei sastra-marma*

"Venerable sir, please hear from me the reason why I chant. My spiritual master considered me a fool and therefore chastised me. 'You are a fool,' he said, 'and have no qualification to study Vedanta philosophy. Go and chant the Krishna mantra constantly, for it is the essence of all mantras. By chanting the Krishna mantra one will be liberated from material existence. And by chanting Krishna's name, one will attain His lotus feet. In the age of Kali, there is no religious activity other than the chanting of the Holy Names. The Holy Name is the essence of all mantras.'" (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.71-74)

The sum and substance of these statements is the following: When a submissive disciple approaches the spiritual master with questions and a service mentality, the guru awards initiation into the mantra which contains within it the divine knowledge of a specific relationship with Krishna. From that moment, having received the divine mercy of the guru, the disciple starts to cast off all absorption in anything that distracts him from devotional life. The disciple engages in Krishna's service and as affection for the Lord develops, becomes inclined to call out His names. Through this practice he reaches fulfillment in pure love for the Lord's lotus feet. Our most worshipable Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura has summarized this process in his *Anubhasya to Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.73 as follows:

"Through chanting the Krishna mantra, the *jiva* begins to have experience of the supermundane realm. He begins to give less precedence to external sense perception and material attachment. Then taking shelter in one of the five relationships, he begins to relish the divine mellows through the combination of all the ingredients that go into their composition: the *vibhavas*, *anubhavas*, *vyabhicari-bhavas*, and *sattvikas*. The heart, which has been purified through the influence of divine exultation, becomes illuminated in pure goodness. In such a state, the living being can experience the object of worship. This process is completely distinct from the enjoyments of the *jiva's* gross or subtle coverings.

"The Name and the One who is Named are not distinct entities. This is the divine knowledge (*divya-jnana*) that is achieved through initiation. One who is actually situated in the regular practice of spiritual life, with the intention of having this realization, attains direct service to Krishna. In this state, he loses interest in the grammatical formalism of the mantra, with its *bija* mantra (*om*, *klim*, etc.), dative case endings (*-aya*, *ave*, *ayai*, *-abhyam*, *-ebhyah*, etc.) and words indicating relationships (*svaha*, *namah*, etc.). Rather, he favors a direct expression of this relationship with the Lord by calling out to Him in the

vocative case. This takes place naturally in the heart that has been illuminated by the mode of pure goodness.⁵ In this state, the devotee gains the ability to unrestrictedly serve the Holy Name in the vocative form. All scriptures and all mantras which contain *divya-jnana* liberate the *jiva* completely and then engage that soul directly in the service of the Lord."

In his comments on the subsequent verse, Sarasvati Thakura continues:

"The Name and the Named are not different from one another. Therefore, just as Lord Krishna is the absolute reality, liberated, the embodiment of pure consciousness, a transcendental philosopher's stone, so too is His name. Only through the worship of the Holy Name (*nama-bhajana*) can both one's gross and subtle misidentifications both be destroyed. The Vaikuntha name alone can save the living being from absorption in thoughts of material sense gratification. Because it is powerful enough to do this, it is called the *mantra-sara*, the essence of all mantras. Every material thing has its name, form, attributes, characteristics, and functions, all of which are subject to arguments and experimental knowledge. The same is not true for the Vaikuntha name; the name, form, attributes and associates of the Lord are all situated in nonduality."

The Glories Of The Holy Names

The chanting of the Holy Names, *harinama-sankirtana*, is designated as the religious principle of the age of Kali in the Vedas (*om asya jananto nama cid vivaktan mahas te visno sumatim bhajamahe*), the *Upanishads* (*Kali-santarana*), the *Smrtis* (*Bhagavad-gita*), the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and other lesser *Puranas*, as well as in histories such as *Mahabharata*. Even so, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu descended in this age to show by His own example that the loud chanting and singing of this great mantra stands above all other religious activities.

Furthermore, in His *Siksastaka*, He proclaimed the glorious victory of *harinama-sankirtana* in a booming voice. He also taught the same through His *Namacarya*, Srila Haridasa Thakura, who unfailingly chanted 300,000 names out loud every single day. After being flogged in 22 market places on the order of the governor of Ambika Kalna, Haridasa showed his allegiance to the Holy Name when he said:

khanda khanda deha mora jaya yadi prana tathapiha vadane na chari harinama

"Though my body may be torn to bits and my life may leave it, even then I will

never give up chanting the Holy Names." (*Chaitanya Bhagavata* 1.14.135)

Mahaprabhu's other dear associates showed similar allegiance to the Holy Name. When we consider the way in which the Lord and His devotees have revealed the power of the Maha-mantra, we must be thrilled with joy and astonishment.

Then why are we so unfortunate? Why do we not immediately receive the fruits of chanting? The reason is clear: we are offenders to the Holy Name.

*namaiham yasya vaci smarana-patha-gatam srotra-mulam gatam va suddham
vasuddha-varnam vyavahita-rahitam tarayaty eva satyam tac ced deha-dravina-
janata-lobha-pasanda-madhye niksiptam syan na phala-janakam sighram evatra
vipra*

"Should someone utter the holy name of the Lord even once, or should he merely remember it or hear it in passing, it will certainly deliver him from material bondage, whether it is correctly or incorrectly pronounced, properly joined, or vibrated in separate parts. O brahmin, if one uses the Holy Name for the benefit of the material body, for material wealth and followers, or under the influence of greed or atheism—in other words, if one utters the name with offenses—such chanting will not produce the desired result with the same rapidity." (*Padma Purana, Hari-bhakti-vilasa* 11.527, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.3.60)

Even so, if we continue to chant diligently, inasmuch as our offensiveness is eliminated, we will be able to experience its benefits, love for Krishna. By chanting the mantra received in initiation one will minimize his material attachments and his taste for chanting the Holy Names will increase. By chanting the Holy Name — by its grace — one will experience the awakening of love for Krishna.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura has written in his song, "*Krsna-nama dhare kata bala?*" (*Saranagati*)

*isat vikasi punah dekhaya nija-rupa-guna citta hari laya krsna pasa
purna vikasita hana vraje more jay a lana dekhaya nija svarupa vilasa*

"When the Name is even slightly revealed, it shows me my own spiritual form and characteristics. It steals my mind and takes it to Krishna's side. When the Name is fully revealed, it takes me directly to Vraja, where it shows me my

personal role in the eternal pastimes."

By the grace of the Holy Name, we too will come to a state where we will say with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu:

kiba mantra dile gosani kiba tara bala japitejapite mantra karila pagala

"What mantra have you given me, O gurudeva! What powers does it possess? As I chant this mantra, I feel that it is turning me into a madman." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.81)

When we come to this point, we will begin to understand the power of the Holy Name.

CHAPTER 10 EXPERTISE IN BHAJANA

Srila Rupa Gosvami has described devotion as very rare (*durlabha*). With the following verse he illustrates just how difficult it is to attain pure *bhakti*.

sadhanaughair anasangair alabhya sucirad api harina casv adeyeti dvidha sa syat sudurlabha

"Bhakti is very difficult to attain for two reasons. First, without genuine attachment to Krishna one cannot attain devotional perfection even if he performs large amounts of devotional activities. The other reason is that Krishna does not easily give it to the aspirant." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.1.35)

An important word in this verse is *anasanga*, "without attachment." The word *asanga* is explained by Jiva Gosvami as "expertise in devotional practice, characterized by direct engagement." The devotional activities referred to in this verse include all the practices, especially the five most potent: associating with compassionate devotees in the same mood and who are more advanced than oneself; chanting the Holy Name, listening to the *Bhagavatam*; living in Mathura or the holy *dhama*; and serving the deity form of the Lord with faith. Even if one engages in these powerful devotional activities, if he is without the necessary expertise, he will not attain their true fruit, *prema*. And even if one should perform devotional service with the required expertise, Krishna does not give *prema* until that devotee has become extremely attached to the goal of the practice (*yavat phala-bhute bhakti -yoge gadhasaktir na jayate tavan na dadatity arthah*).

Jiva Gosvami's definition of *asanga* as expertise in devotional practice characterized by direct engagement is significant. If someone is engaged in devotional service while seeking goals such as heavenly sense enjoyment, he cannot be considered expert. Fruitive work, philosophical speculation or yoga are of no help in realizing the goal of love for Krishna either. For this reason, Rupa Gosvami has given a comprehensive definition of *bhakti* as the cultivation of Krishna consciousness coupled with an effort to please Him. This culture must not be mixed with the above mentioned practices, or motivated by any other objectives.

Choosing The Right Kind Of Practice

Since the first characteristic of expertise in *bhajana* is direct engagement in appropriate devotional activities (*saksat tad-bhajane pravrttih*), it is necessary to judge which are the most effective. There are a large number of verses in the *Bhagavatam*¹ that specifically mention a variety of devotional practices— hearing, chanting, and remembering—but in the final analysis, the chanting of the Holy Names is considered to be the most powerful. This is supported by the following text from the *Bhagavatam*:

etan nirvidyamananam icchatam akuto-bhayam yoginam nrpa nirnitam harer namanukirtanam

"O King, it has been ascertained that for those yogis who are indifferent to material pleasures and who desire complete fearlessness, the best path is constant chanting of the Holy Name of the Lord." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 2.1.11)

In the *Sarartha-darsini*, Visvanatha gives the following extensive commentary:

"Sukadeva recites this verse in response to the following anticipated question: 'It is clear throughout the Bhagavatam that devotion is the only process for attaining the Supreme. But does it specify any devotional practice which stands out above all others in the way that an emperor stands above his vassals?'

"According to the verse *tasmad bharata* [*Srimad Bhagavatam* 2.1.5] hearing, chanting, and remembering are the three primary aspects of devotional practice. Now this verse makes it clear that, of these three, chanting or *kirtana*, is foremost. *Kirtana* is defined as the audible recitation of Krishna's name, pastimes, attributes, etc. Of these, *nama-kirtanam*, chanting of the Holy Names, is supreme.

"In this verse, the word *anu-kirtanam* is used. This can be interpreted in two ways: either as chanting those names of the Lord which correspond to one's own devotional mood, or simply as uninterrupted chanting of the Names. By saying 'it has been ascertained,' (*nirnitam*) Sukadeva is not claiming personal authority, but that of the previous *acaryas*. Thus there is no need to cite any other proofs.

"Sukadeva goes on to further describe the nature of the chanting of the Holy Name by saying *akuto-bhayam* ('complete fearlessness'). Not only is there no fear of considerations of purity of time and place, but no objection from the

infidels (*mlecchas*) who normally object to deity worship and certain other aspects of devotional service.²

"Next, Suka uses the word *nirvidyamanaanam* ('indifferent') to indicate that there is no more beneficial activity for either those in the beginning stages of devotional service or those on the perfected stage. *Nirvidyamanaanam* refers to those who are indifferent to all desires up to and including the desire for liberation. On the other hand, *icchatam* ('those who desire') indicates that all desires are fulfilled by chanting the Holy Name. As the saying goes, 'Go to the hub'; anyone who goes to the center can easily go in any direction; so too, the chanting of the Holy Name is like the root activity which leads to the fulfillment of all desires.

"Another understanding of this verse is that the chanting of the Holy Names is suitable for anyone; *nirvidyamanaanam* refers to the exclusive devotees; *icchatam* refers to all those who desire heavenly pleasures or liberation; while *yoginam* refers to the self-satisfied *atmaramas*. No matter who they are, the chanting of the Holy Name bestows on each of them the results they seek."³

Expertise Is Desireless Devotion

This idea that expertise in devotion is measured by one's freedom from desire is supported by the Bhagavatam, where it is said;

akamah sarva-kamo va moksa-kama udara-dhih tivrena bhakti-yogena yajeta purusam param

"All people of expansive intelligence should worship the Supreme Person by the process of intense Bhakti yoga, whether they are pure devotees without any personal desire, or whether they are filled with all kinds of desires, or seek liberation." (*SrimadBhagavatam* 2.3.10)

In his commentary to this verse, Visvanatha elaborates on some of the words used in it. "The words *udara-dhi* mean 'truly intelligent.' In other words, the sign of true intelligence is to make the Supreme Lord the object of one's devotion, whether he has all kinds of material desires or no desires at all. The absence of such devotion is a sign of low intelligence. The word *tivrena* ('intense') means unmixed by other activities such as *jnana* or *karma*. Bhakti when unmixed in this way is intense in the way sunlight is in a cloudless sky."

Those who do not possess expansive intelligence, the narrow-minded, are not able to take up intense devotional service. However, because of the purifying nature of devotional service, it is also a sign of good intelligence to take up bhakti even if one isn't pure.

*buddhiman-arthe yadi vicara-jna haya nija-kama lagiha tabe krsnere
bhajaya bhakti binu kona sddhana dite nare phala saba phala deya bhakti
svatantra prabala aja-gala-stana-nyaya anya sadhana ataeva hari bhaje
buddhiman jana*

"The meaning of 'intelligent' is to have good judgement. It is a sign of good judgement to engage in devotional service, even if one has desires for sense gratification or liberation. This is because no other processes can yield its promised results unless supplemented by bhakti. Bhakti, however, is so strong and independent that it can give all results on its own. Other practices are unable to independently yield their results any more than the nipples on the neck of a she-goat can give milk. Knowing this, an intelligent person worships Krishna exclusively." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.24.91-93)

"you Must Be A Laksesvara, A Millionaire!"

The next aspect of devotional expertise in chanting is in the amount that one chants. Whenever invited to dine, Mahaprabhu took the opportunity of revealing His desire to have His devotees chant the Holy Names. Upon being asked, He would laugh and say, "First become a *laksa-pati* or millionaire. I only eat at the houses of millionaires." When they heard this, the brahmins who had tendered the invitation became puzzled and worried. They made some remarks of praise and then one of them made this submission to the Lord: "Sir, none of us even has a thousand rupees to his name, what to speak of a *lakh* (hundred thousand) rupees. But if you don't accept my invitation, then my whole existence as a householder has been a waste and is better off going up in flames."

The Lord answered, "Do you know what I mean by a *laksa-pati*? I mean someone who chants a hundred thousand names of the Lord every single day. To Me, such a person is a true millionaire. I only take meals at the house of such a person and I never eat anywhere else."

When the brahmins heard the Lord's statement, they no longer worried. Indeed they became joyful. They said, "Thank you, Lord. We will chant a hundred

thousand names every day. Please come and eat at our house. We are so fortunate that you teach us in this way."

So from that day on, all the brahmins chanted a lakh of names in the hope that the Lord would accept their invitation. The Lord of Vaikuntha engaged people in the performance of Bhakti yoga while Himself relishing the ocean of devotion. Lord Sri Krishna Chaitanya descended to this earth to preach Bhakti yoga; thus He never greeted anyone without inquiring about their spiritual progress."
(*Chaitanya Bhagavata* 3.9.116-127)

Here we see just how Mahaprabhu both practiced and taught the process of Bhakti yoga, chiefly as expressed through the chanting of the Holy Names. Mahaprabhu's avatar had this purpose. Other than devotion, He had no subject of inquiry —

*bhakti vina jijnasa na hare prabhu ara. prabhu bale jejanera krsna-bahkti
ache kusala mangala tara nitya thake pache*

The Lord said, "Whoever has devotion for Krishna is followed everywhere by good fortune and happiness."

(*Chaitanya Bhagavata* 3.9.128)

One who is engaged in the practice of devotion has all good fortune. Without such devotion, even an emperor is unfortunate. Devotion is life's real treasure. Anyone who possesses these riches is treated with respect in the society of devotees, even if he is materially poor.

Our most worshipable spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada, commented on the above verses as follows: "Lord Gaurasundara says that the Supreme Lord [in His deity form] is truly served in a home where someone chants 100,000 Names every single day. The Lord accepts the food offerings made to Him by such a devotee. However, the Lord does not bless a disciple by accepting his offerings if he does not chant a lakh of Names a day. Every single devotee must daily chant a lakh of Names; if he does not, then he will soon become attached to various sense objects and become incapable of serving the Lord. For this reason, everyone who has taken up residence at the Chaitanya Math makes it a rule to chant a lakh of Holy Names every day. If not, the deity of Gaurasundara will not accept the offerings made to Him." (*Gaudiya-bhasya*, 3.9.121)

He further writes: "Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's followers do not converse with non-devotees. One should not make friendship with those who are engaged in talking about fruitive activities, philosophy, or other desires. Fallen conditioned souls, those who do not daily chant a lakh of *Harinama*, are affected by growing material desires. The presence of such desires results in an incapacity to serve Lord Gaurasundara. The standard in the Gaudiya school of devotion is *laksesvara*. The fallen, unable to accept this standard, engage in other kinds of practices in the name of *bhajana*. Such activities are all deception and of no real benefit to the practitioner." (Gaudiya-bhasya, 3.9.127)

In the book *Sarasvati-jaya-sri*,⁴ the following account is given of the example set by Srila Prabhupada himself: "While living at Mayapura, Srila Prabhupada took a vow to observe the strictest rules of austerity and to chant three lakh of *Harinama* every single day. Om Vishnupada Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura had previously observed a vow of chanting a billion Holy Names (three complete years of chanting three *lakh* a day) and had given Srila Prabhupada the *japa-mala* with which he had performed this feat. Srila Prabhupada used this mala to fulfill his own vow of chanting a billion names. Up to the present day, Srila Prabhupada still uses this same japa-mala. Srila Prabhupada did not approve of those who whimsically changed their japa beads."

Our worshipable Srila Prabhupada set the example of concentrated devotional service in the same way that Mahaprabhu did, knowing that without teaching by example spreading these doctrines is impossible. We, who claim to be the servant of His servants, pray to Lord Gaurasundara and to all the spiritual masters who represent him (beginning with Sri Svarupa Damodara and Rupa Gosvami), for nothing more than the ability to follow this example so that we too can become expert in the matter of worship; that is, chanting the Holy Name without offenses.

Expertise In Bhajana Means Oefenseless Chanting

Mahaprabhu stated that the nine processes of devotional service have great power to bestow upon one love for Krishna. Of these nine, the chanting of the Holy Name is most powerful of all—but it must be chanted without offenses. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura therefore states in his *Harinama-cintamani* that expertise in *bhajana* means chanting the Holy Name without offenses:

aparadha nahi chari nama jadi laya sahasra-sadhane tara bhakti nahi

*haya jnane mukti karme bhukti jnani karmi jane sudurlabha krsna bhakti
nirmala sadhane bhukti-mukti sukta-sama bhakti mukta-phala jivera mahima
bhahti-prapti sunirmala sadhane naipunya-yoge atyalpa sadhane bhakti-lata
prema-phala dena bhakta-jane dasa aparadha chari namera grahana ihai
naipunya haya sadhane bhajana*

"If someone chants the Holy Name without giving up offenses, then he may perform outstanding feats of devotion without developing love for Krishna. The fruitive workers and monist philosophers seek sense gratification and liberation. Devotion to Krishna is only attainable through engagement in pure devotional practices and is thus very rare. Sense gratification and liberation are like the mother of pearl which is worthless, while bhakti is a pearl, a jewel of great value.

"The glory of the living entity comes from the attainment of pure devotion. If one's practice is done expertly, there is no necessity in engaging in great amounts of practice. The creeper of devotional service will grow and give the fruits of love to the devotee. So give up the ten offenses and chant the Holy Name. This is the expertise which gives power to your devotional practice." (*Harinama-cintamani*, 13)

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami also states in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta* that, if one commits offenses, one may chant the Holy Name or listen to Krishna katha for many lifetimes without obtaining the result of pure devotional service.

bahu janma kare jadi sravana kirtana tabu ta na paya krsna-pade prema-dhana

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura comments on this verse in the following way: "A person who commits the ten types of offenses to the Holy Name may hear and chant for many lifetimes without attaining love for Krishna." (*Amrta-pravaha-bhasya* 1.8.16)

Srila Prabhupada elaborates: "One who engages in hearing and chanting without taking shelter of Lord Gaurasundara Mahaprabhu may do so for many lifetimes without achieving the treasure of love for Krishna. Those who follow Mahaprabhu's instruction to chant while thinking themselves lower than the straw in the street, as tolerant as a tree, with a respectful and modest attitude towards others, quickly become free of the ten offenses and attain their reward of ecstatic love."

krsna-nama kare aparadhera vicara krsna balile aparadhira na haya vikara

"One must take offenses into consideration when chanting the holy name of Krishna. Therefore one who commits offenses does not experience ecstatic transformations even while chanting." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.8.24)

The Ten Offenses To The Holy Name

In his *Anubhasya* to the above verse, Srila Prabhupada quotes the following verses from the *Padma Purana*, summarizing the ten offenses to the Holy Name.

*satam ninda namnah paramam aparadham vitanute yatah khyatim yatam
katham u sahate tad-vigarham*

(1) The first and greatest offense is to blaspheme devotees who, through their attachment to the Holy Name, spread its glories throughout the world. How will the Lord who is manifest in the Holy Name ever tolerate such blasphemous activities?

*sivasya sri-visnor ya iha guna-namadi-sakalam dhiya bhinnam pasyet sa
khalu hari-namahita-karah*

(2) Anyone who considers the all-auspicious name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Vishnu to be distinct from His person in the way that material signifiers are different from the signified object, is acting in a way displeasing to the Holy Name.

Anyone who considers demigods such as Lord Shiva to be independent, or nondifferent from Lord Vishnu, thinking such demigods' names, qualities, forms or pastimes to be equal to Vishnu's, is committing the second offense to the Holy Name.

guror avajna sruti-sastra-nindanam tathartha-vado hari-namni kalpanam

(3) The third offense, called *guror avajna*, is to consider the spiritual master, who knows the truth of the Holy Name, to be an ordinary man of the world and so to be envious of him.

(4) The fourth offense (*sruti-sastra-ninda*) is to blaspheme the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Vaishnava Puranas.

(5) The fifth offense (*artha-vada*) is to consider the glory of the Holy Name an exaggeration.

(6) The sixth offense is to consider the glories of the holy name of the Lord to be imaginary.

namno balad yasya hi papa-buddhir na viayate tasya yamair hi suddhih

(7) One who thinks that he may commit sins on the strength of the Hare Krishna mantra's power to overcome all sinful reactions is such a great offender that he cannot be purified by any amount of regulative activities, meditation, withdrawal of the senses from their objects, concentration, or other yoga practices.

dharma-vrata-tyaga-hutadi-sarva subha-kriya-samyam api pramadah

(8) The eighth offense is to erroneously think that chanting the Holy Name is in any way equal to other kinds of religious activity, vow of renunciation, sacrificial ritual or auspicious mundane performance.

asraddadhane vimukhe 'py asmvati yas copadesah siva-namaparadhah

(9) The ninth offense is to preach the glories of the most auspicious Holy Name to someone who has no faith, who is uninterested, or who is not listening.

srute 'pi nama-mahatmye yah priti-rahito narah aham-mamadi-paramo namni so 'py aparadha-krt

(10) One who has heard the glories of the Lord's holy name but develops no appreciation for it and continues to be absorbed in thinking of himself and his possessions is also an offender to the Holy Name.

The Merciful Names Of Gaura-nitai

In chanting the holy name of Krishna, there is therefore, a consideration of offenses. An offender may chant lakhs and lakhs of Names without ever achieving the fruit of the chanting, the wealth of ecstatic love. Different rules apply, however, to the chanting of the names of Gaura-Nitai:

caitanya-nityanande nahi e-saba vicara nama laite prema dena bahe asrudhara

"But all these considerations do not exist in the chanting of the names of Lord Chaitanya and Nityananda. As soon as anyone chants their names, he is awarded the ecstasies of love, and tears flow from his eyes." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.8.31)

The *Prakṛta-sahajīya* school of Tantrikas interpret this verse in an unauthorized way. They think that they can commit offenses on the strength of this statement without any attempt at restraint. The fact is that the founders of the *sankīrtana* movement, Lord Chaitanya and Nityananda, would never tolerate any offensive behavior. They possess unlimited qualities, foremost among which are Their generosity and munificence. A living being, even if still in a state of contamination, will be purified by taking shelter of them. By Their mercy, one will understand the nature of Their divine form and expansions. Gradually, They mercifully teach expertise in chanting by freeing one from the offenses to the Holy Name. This leads to the experience of love of God.

Srila Prabhupada explains further, "Krishna's name and Gaura's name are both identical with the person they signify. If after reading the above discussion one thinks the name of Krishna less powerful or limited, then he should be recognized as suffering the effects of ignorance. Nevertheless, in terms of attaining the ultimate goal of life, the names of Gaura-Nitai have a greater benefit for the conditioned soul. Gaura-Nityananda are magnanimous, and within this magnanimity sweetness can be found. Krishna's magnanimity is felt only by the liberated, the perfected, and surrendered souls. By contrast, the flood of Gaura-Nityananda's compassion flows even over those who are contaminated by materialistic desires and offenses, delivering them from these contaminants. Such persons can then attain to Krishna's lotus feet."

This does not mean, however, that one abandons the worship of Radha and Krishna to exclusively worship Mahāprabhu. Such is not the meaning of worshiping Mahāprabhu. To worship Mahāprabhu, the combined form of Radha and Krishna, means to accept his leadership and that of His intimate associates like Svarūpa Dāmodara, the Gosvamis (Rūpa, Rāghunātha) and others. Rāmananda Rāya revealed Mahāprabhu's desire:

srestha upasya yugala radha-kṛṣṇa nama

"The best of all objects of worship is the Divine Couple named Radha and Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.8.256)

Read otherwise, this can be understood to mean, "The best of all objects of worship are the names of the Divine Couple, Radha and Krishna, in other words, the Hare Krishna *Maha-mantra*." To chant this *Maha-mantra* without offenses demonstrates real expertise in the worship of the Lord.

CHAPTER 11 LISTENING TO THE BHAGAVATA

The word *matha* includes the ideas of a student hostel, an educational establishment, and a temple, or place of worship. The Sanskrit verb root *math* means "to dwell, to reside." Thus, the word is defined in the following way: *mathanti vasanti yatraparamartha-siksarthinah*—"A *matha* is a place where those desiring to learn about the ultimate spiritual truth reside." Though the presence of a deity and temple is also implied in the term, the *matha's* primary purpose is the dissemination of knowledge of the categories of *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana* to those who serve that deity. There is furthermore an implied obligation to distribute this knowledge to those living outside the *matha's* confines, for their welfare.

Through contact with the tiny spiritual spark, the mind and intelligence maintain a semblance of consciousness. The eternal function of this spiritual spark or soul is to be attracted to the all-attractive, infinite consciousness of the Supreme Soul. On the other hand, the eternal function of the all-attractive Supreme Soul is to pull all the infinitesimal individual souls towards Him and to give them a place at His feet where they can get a taste of everlasting, infinite, supreme joy. Though the *jiva*, the spiritual spark, is eternal, until it comes into contact with the eternal, infinite and supremely joyful substance it will never find satisfaction in the passing pleasures derived from limited and temporary substances.

The word *kr̥si* refers to the all-attractive state of being, while *na* means the supreme bliss. When these two are combined, one gets the name of the Supreme Brahman, Krishna. Out of His affection for His lost eternal servants, Krishna calls out to them anxiously like a cow who has lost her calf. He cries out, *mam ekam saranam vraja*—"Take shelter of Me alone." Unfortunately, however, the living beings are so enthralled by the Lord's external energy that they pay Him no notice. They do not know that there is no other way of overcoming the powerful enchantments of *maya* other than by surrendering to Him. As Krishna Himself says in the *Gita* (7.14):

daivi hy esa gunamayi mama maya duratyayd mam eva ye prapadyante mayam etam taranti te

"The external energy consisting of the three qualities is divinely empowered and thus impossible to conquer. Whoever surrenders to Me, however, can cross over this maya."

The eternal constitutional position of the spirit soul is service to the Lord. Because he has forgotten this service, he now has to be buffeted by all kinds of distresses and evils in this world of matter. A life bereft of service offers no hope for true satisfaction. Despite the great treasure of love for Krishna, the *jiva* whose vision is obscured by ignorance pursues so many inferior, meaningless, worthless affairs, all of which are temporary and lifeless. Rather than discovering friendship with other living beings, he becomes entangled in competitive and envious relationships with them.

Having fallen into the blind well of ignorance, the *jivas* fail to recognize that their only real welfare lies with the Supreme Lord. In competition for the objects which they falsely think are beneficial to them, they create terrible tragedies such as wars which threaten to engulf the entire world like great blazing fires. The fire which leads to the universal destruction, Durjayalinga, results from Rudra's anger upon seeing the general indifference of humanity to the service of the Lord.

The meaning of ignorance is lack of knowledge about that entity from whom we have come, by whose mercy our existence is maintained, and in whom we will have our final and supreme resting place after the destruction of this body. This ignorance (*ajnana*, or *avidya*) is the source of all our troubles. It is by the higher knowledge of devotion to Krishna that such ignorance is to be overcome. The *Bhagavatam* says: *sa vidya tan-matiryaya*, "That alone is knowledge by which one's mind becomes fixed on Him." Therefore, we must acknowledge the great and unavoidable necessity for *mathas* where those who have taken up an exemplary lifestyle devoted to the Supreme Lord can live, associate, and study the divine knowledge of devotional service.

The Authority Of The Bhagavatam

Since the mind and body are composed of dull and temporary matter, their nature, or essential activities, are similarly temporary. By contrast, the soul is eternal and spiritual and its nature, or essential activities, are similarly eternal. The essential activity, or *dharma*, of the soul has been established by the Supreme Lord Himself. None of the gods, seers, *siddhas*, demons, humans,

Yaksas, Raksasas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, Vidyadharas, or Caranas know the inner secret of this natural function of the soul. It is a mystery which has been mercifully revealed by the Lord only to Brahma, Narada, Sambhu, the four Kumaras, Lord Kapiladeva, Svayambhuva Manu, Prahlada, Janaka, Bhishma, Bali, Sukadeva, and Yamaraja. These twelve *mahajanas*, or great authorities, thus know the most secret, pure, and inscrutable *Bhagavata-dharma*. Despite the inaccessibility of this divine knowledge, one can get a taste of it through the mercy of these devotees and the Lord Himself. To be able to relish this divine nectar is certainly a matter of great fortune.

The natural activity of the soul, or *Bhagavata-dharma*, is identical with the yoga of devotion, which consists primarily of *harinama-sankirtana*. This activity has been identified in all the scriptures as the supreme religion of for all beings. One should look particularly at the story of Ajamila in the sixth canto of the *Bhagavatam*, where this has been described in full.

The Supreme Lord lies beyond the purview of the material senses. He is thus known as Adhoksaja. The supreme religion is causeless devotion to Him. Such devotion should be free from any ulterior motive such as personal sense enjoyment, liberation or mystical perfections, and uninterrupted by other types of activities such as *karma* and *jnana*. This is also stated in the first canto, second chapter of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

When Dharmaraja disguised himself as a heron and asked questions of Yudhishthira, one of the questions was about the truth of religion. The eldest Pandava responded:

dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhayam maha-jano yena gatah sa panthah

"It is very difficult to understand the secret of religion, but one who follows in the footsteps of the great authorities, or *mahajanas*, will be successful."
(*Mahabharata, Vana-parva* 313.117)

The *mahajanas* are great devotees in whom the *Bhagavatam's* teachings are incarnate. Thus anyone who wishes to understand the doctrines of the *Bhagavata* religion must absolutely follow in the footsteps of those great authorities like Suka and Vyasa. The father of the creation, Brahma, received the essential *Bhagavata* doctrines in a condensed form of four essential verses directly from the Lord Himself. The seer of the gods, Narada, subsequently heard it from him.

Vyasadeva then heard the Bhagavata from Narada Muni. Sukadeva received the teachings from Vyasa and Pariksit from Suka. Ugrasrava Suta listened to the *Bhagavatam* as it was spoken by Suka to Pariksit and then went on to recount the entire *Purana* to the sages at Naimisaranya led by Saunaka. From this history we can note the dissemination of the Bhagavatam's teachings.

In our age, the golden avatar and purifier of the Kali Yuga, Gaurahari, and His associates accepted the *Bhagavatam* as the king of all literature, the best of all scriptures, and the genuine commentary on the Vedanta. Mahaprabhu thus called the *Bhagavatam* the most authoritative source of knowledge about the Supreme Brahman. In view of this, it is evidently the duty of those who live in the *matha* to study and teach this great scripture.

Hearing The Bhagavatam Is A Devotional Activity

The *Bhagavatam* discards all false or incomplete understandings of religion. Therefore, the *Bhagavata* itself states:

*srimad-bhagavatam puranam amalam yad vaisnavanam priyam yasmin
paramahamsyam ekam amalam jnanam param giyate tatra jnana-viraga-bhakti-
sahitam naiskarmyam aviskrtam tac chrnvan supathan vicarana-paro bhaktya
vimucyen narah*

"The beautiful *Bhagavatam* is the spotless Purana, the scripture most dear to the Vaishnavas. The supreme knowledge which is the unique wealth of the *paramahamsas* is glorified therein. One who reads it will discover the liberation which comes from knowledge, renunciation, and devotion. A human being who hears and studies the *Bhagavatam* and then discusses and meditates on what he has heard and studied will, by this devotional act alone, be liberated." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 12.13.18)

Of course, it should be understood that the *Bhagavatam* reveals more than just the means for attaining liberation; it also shows how to attain the ultimate liberated platform of *prema-bhakti*.

The Bhagavatam — Commentary On Gayatri And Vedanta

When discussing the devotional act of hearing, Jiva Gosvami indicates that its topmost manifestation comes from listening to the *Srimad Bhagavatam* as spoken by Suka, and realized by Vyasa in the highest reaches of his trance, and

as transmitted by Saunaka to the 60,000 seers at Naimisaranya. In his *Tattva-sandarbha*, Jiva quotes the *Garuda Purana*, which calls the *Bhagavata* "the meaning of the *Vedanta Sutra*, the explanation of the purpose of the *Mahabharata*, a commentary on the Gayatri Mantra, and an elaboration of the Vedas themselves."

artho'yam brahma-sutranam bharatartha-vinirnayah gayatri-bhasya-rupo'sau vedartha-paribrmhitah

In the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Madhya-lila* in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta*, Prakasananda Sarasvati asked to hear the primary purport of the Vedanta from the Lord. Mahaprabhu elaborated on the glories of the *Bhagavatam*, reiterating that the *Bhagavatam* is the natural commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras*.

The seed of the desire tree of the Vedic literature is the syllable om, also known as *pranava*. This seed germinates and becomes a seedling, the Gayatri Mantra, which is called the Mother of the Veda and is said to explain the *pranava*. The fruit of the Vedic desire tree is the *Bhagavatam* in its compact form of four verses—the *Catuhsloki Bhagavatam*. This essential *Bhagavatam* was taught to Brahma by the Supreme Lord Himself. Brahma then expanded on these few verses and taught it to his son Narada. Narada again repeated the same teaching to Vyasa, who upon hearing it, realized:

ei artha amara sutrera vyakhyanurupa bhagavata kariba sutrera bhasya-svarupa

"This teaching is an explanation of the sutras that I have written. I shall now write the *Bhagavatam* on the basis of this teaching and that will be my own full commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*. " (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.25.95)

According to this statement, it is clear that the *Bhagavata* is the crowning glory of the Vedic literature. Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa churned all the *Upanishads* to extract the cream of its knowledge and then composed the *Srimad Bhagavatam* as the only commentary which is true to the word of the *Vedanta Sutras*. This means that the knowledge of *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana* that is found throughout the Vedic literature is summarized in essence in the four verses of the *Catuhsloki Bhagavatam* and expanded on in greater detail throughout the 18,000 verses of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

There are 11 principal *Upanishads*: *ha*, *Kena*, *Katha*, *Prasna*, *Mundaka*,

Mandukya, Aittareya, Taittiriya, Chandogya, Brhadaranyaka and Svetasvatara. Vyasa based the *Vedanta Sutras* on the essential teachings found in these texts. Many of the verses of the *Upanishads* are directly explained in the *Bhagavatam*, such as the *Isopanisad* verse (*isavasyam idam sarvam*), which is elaborated on at *Srimad Bhagavatam* 8.1.10. The very first verse of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* explains the first sutra of the Vedanta, *janmady asya yatah*. That same verse also includes an explanation of the Gayatri Mantra. Thus Mahaprabhu states:

*gayatrira arthe ei grantha-arambhana satyam param sambandha dhimahi
sadhana-prayojana*

"The first verse of this book gives an explanation of the Gayatri Mantra. The *sambandha-tattva* is hinted at in the words *satyam param* ('the supreme truth') and the word *dhimahi* ('we meditate upon') indicates the *abhidheya* of devotional practice and the *prayojana*, love for Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.25.140)

In his *Anubhasya* to this verse, our most worshipable spiritual master Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura elucidates as follows: "The very first verse of the *Bhagavatam* is an explanation of the Gayatri Mantra. The supreme truth refers to the *sambandha*. The effort to meditate is an indication of the practice of devotional service, which is the *abhidheya*. That which is achieved by the practice of devotional service, the *prayojana*, is perfected meditation, or *prema-bhakti*."

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami also confirms that the *Mahabharata* and its explanation, the *Srimad Bhagavatam* are the two primary scriptures in this age. These two scriptures state that the Lord appears as an avatar in the Age of Kali. This is his conclusion:

bhagavata-bharata dui sastrera pradhana sei dui kahe halite saksat-avatara

"*Srimad Bhagavatam* and the *Mahabharata* are the two most important Vedic scriptures, and both reveal that the Lord appears Himself as an incarnation in the Age of Kali." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.6.97-8)

Mahaprabhu's Teachings About The Bhagavatam

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami summarizes the personal teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as follows:

krsna-tattva bhakti-tattva prema-tattva sara bhava-tattva rasa-tattva lila-tattva ara sri-bhagavata-tattva-rasa karila pracare krsna-tulya bhagavata janaila samsare

"Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu personally preached Krishna's doctrines, devotional service, love of Godhead, emotional ecstasy, sacred rapture, and the Lord's pastimes. All these nectarine doctrines are found in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Thus Mahaprabhu taught the entire world that the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna are identical." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.25.258-9)

The Lord also mentions the *Bhagavatam* when He lists the 64 kinds of devotional service in practice. There, the idea of serving things which are related to the Lord (*tadiya*) is explained as follows:

tadiya tulasi vaisnava mathura bhagavata ei carira seva haya krsnera abhimata

"Things related to the Lord' include the *tulasi* plant, Krishna's devotees, His abode in Mathura, and the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Krishna is very eager to see everyone render the appropriate service to these four." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.121)

Hearing the *Srimad Bhagavatam* is also included among the five principal acts of devotional service.

sadhu-sanga nama-kirtana bhagavata-sravana mathura-vasa sri-murtira sraddhaya sevana sakala-sadhana-srestha ei panca anga krsna-prema janmaya ei pancera alpa sanga eka anga sadhe keha sadhe bahu anga nistha haile upajaya premera taranga

"One should associate with devotees, chant the holy name of the Lord, hear *Srimad Bhagavatam*, reside at Mathura, and worship the deity with faith and veneration. These five limbs of devotional service are the best of all. Even a slight performance of these five awakens love for Krishna. Whether a person executes only one or many of these processes of devotional service, the waves of love of Godhead will well up as a result of his fixed determination, or *nistha*." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.214-5, 219)

After hearing Sri Chaitanya explain the *atmarama* verse from the *Bhagavatam* in 61 different ways, Sanatana was so amazed that he fell at the Lord's feet and began to praise Him as follows:

*saksat isvara tumi vrajendra-nandana tomara nisvase sarva-veda-
pravartana tumi vakta bhagavatera tumi jana artha toma vina anya janite
nahika samartha*

"My dear Lord, You are the Supreme Lord Krishna Himself, the son of Maharaja Nanda. All the Vedic literatures are manifested with Your exhalation. You are the original speaker of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and You alone know its true meaning. Other than You, no one can grasp it completely." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.24.309-310)

To this, Mahaprabhu answered,

*prabhu kahe kene kara amara stavana bhagavatera svarupa kene na kara
vicarana krsna-tulya bhagavata vibhu sarvasraya prati-sloke prati-aksare nana
artha kaya prasnottare bhagavate kariyache nirdhara janhara sravane lake lage
camatkara*

"Why are you glorifying Me? Why do you not try to understand the transcendental position of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*? Like Krishna, *Srimad Bhagavatam* is the infinite shelter of everything. There are multiple meanings in each and every verse, in each and every syllable of this scripture. The *Srimad Bhagavatam* establishes its conclusions in the form of questions and answers and those who hear them are amazed."

(*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.24.311-313)

Mahaprabhu's Devotees' Love For The Bhagavatam

Mahaprabhu's associates also showed great affection for the *Bhagavatam*. Even before leaving his position in Shah Hussain's court to join Mahaprabhu, Srila Sanatana Gosvami stayed at home and took up the study of the *Bhagavatam* in the company of 20 or 30 scholars.

*lobhi kayastha-gana raja-karya hare apane sva-grhe kare sastrera
vicare bhattacharya pandita bisa trisa lana bhagavata vicara karena sabhate
vasiya*

"While he himself remained at home and discussed revealed scriptures, Sanatana's ambitious clerical and secretarial staff performed all of his government duties. In the meantime, he called together an assembly of 20 or 30

learned brahmin scholars and discussed the *Bhagavatam* with them." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.19.1617)

Mahaprabhu's dear associate, Raghunatha Bhatta, had a great reputation as a speaker on the *Bhagavatam*. When in Purl, the Lord told him:

*amara ajnaya raghundtha jaha vrndavane tahan jana raha rupa-sanatana-
sthane bhagavata para sada laha krsna-nama acire karibena krpa krsna
bhagavan"*

"My dear Raghunatha, follow My instructions and go to Vrindavan. Once there, place yourself under the care of Rupa and Sanatana Gosvamis. You must study the *SrimadBhagavatam* and constantly chant Krishna's names. If you do so, Lord Krishna will very soon bestow His mercy upon you." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.14.120-1)

*prabhura thani ajna lana gela vrndavane asraya karila asi rupa-sanatane rupa-
gosanira sabhaya karena bhagavata-pathana bhagavata pante preme aulaya
tanra mana*

"Raghunatha Bhatta then took permission from Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and departed for Vrindavan. When he arrived there, he took shelter of Rupa and Sanatana Gosvamis. Whenever Raghunatha Bhatta recited *Srimad Bhagavatam* and gave discourses on it in Rupa and Sanatana's assembly, he would be overwhelmed with ecstatic love for Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.14.125-6)

Hear The Bhagavatam In The Association Of Devoiees

Rupa Gosvami also writes in his *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* that one should relish the topics of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* in the association of *rasikas* — *srimad-bhagavatarthanam asvado rasikaih saha* (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.2.91). By this, Rupa means that one should seek the company of devotees who know the transcendental meaning of the *Bhagavatam*, who understand pure devotional mellows and who are expert in the art of rendering devotional service. They should have the same kinds of aspirations as oneself and should preferably be more advanced than oneself. It is in the association of such people that one can relish the *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

On the other hand, the deeper meaning of the *Bhagavatam* will not be

understood if one studies it in the company of well-educated persons who have no interest in the devotional path, even though they may be expert in grammar or etymology, or connoisseurs of mundane poetry and literature. If they are attached to the company of women or absorbed in their mundane household affairs, so much the worse. Other types of persons from whom one should not hear the *Bhagavatam* are impersonalists who reject the eternal character of service to the Lord and His devotees, offenders to the Holy Name, people who use the trappings of the renounced life to make a living, or those who are professional distributors of mantra initiation. One cannot learn the inner meaning of the scripture meant for *paramahamsas* on the highest platform of spiritual realization by approaching those who make a living by reciting the *Bhagavatam* while seeking the gratification of their material senses and remaining attached to mundane sense objects.

None of the above-mentioned persons has any qualification to comprehend the purport of that great scripture. The *Srutis* and *Smrtis* have given their verdict on how this comprehension can be achieved:

yasya deve para bhaktir yatha deve tatha gurau tasyaite kathita hy arthah prakaaante mahatmanah

"Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, who is the Lord's manifestation and not different from him, are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed." (*Svetasvatara Upanishad*6.23)

In other words, only such a person be revealed a deeper understanding of the scriptures such as the *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

bhaktya bhagavatam grahyam na budahya na ca tikaya.

"A person can understand the *Srimad Bhagavatam* through devotion; not simply by exercising his intelligence, or simply through studying the commentaries." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.24.314)

Vrindavan dasa Thakura has also written:

bhagavata bujhi henajara ache jnana se na jane kabhu bhagavatera pramana

"Anyone who thinks that he has understood the meaning of the *Srimad*

Bhagavatam will never truly be able to know its significance." (*Chaitanya Bhagavata* 2.21.24)

Without single-minded commitment to the pleasure of the Supreme Lord Krishna and His devotees, it is indeed impossible to understand the meaning of the *Bhagavatam* through mundane scholarship or simply by mental gymnastics. And even if one should understand something, to bring this understanding to fruition would be impossible without faithful and determined chanting of the Holy Names, purely and without offenses, following in the footsteps of the spiritual master and other exemplary devotees. When one develops a taste for the Holy Name, his study of the *Bhagavatam* bears fruit. Anyone who studies the *Bhagavatam* with a view to showing off his brilliance and learning, or to make a comfortable living, or to gain wealth, fame or status, is simply wasting his valuable time.

Thus Svarupa Damodara Gosvami advised the brahmin from East Bengal:

jaha bhagavata para vaisnavera sthane ekanta asraya kara caitanya-carane caitanyera bhakta-ganera nitya kara sanga tabe ta janiba siddhanta-samudra-taranga

"Go and study the *Bhagavatam* with a Vaishnava. Take exclusive shelter of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's lotus feet. Always associate with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's devotees. If you do all these things, you will be able to plunge into the ocean of His divine teachings." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.5.131-32)

The Importance Of Siddhanta

Someone may object that there is no need of studying scriptures in order to establish the correct spiritual doctrine, that simply engaging in devotional service itself is sufficient to attain perfection. Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami responds to this possible objection by saying that through a correct understanding of doctrine one's taste for rendering service increases:

siddhanta baliya citte na kara alasa iha ha-ite krsne lage sudraha manasa caitanya-mahima jani e saba siddhante citta drdha haria lage mahima-jnana haite

"Do not be lazy and avoid discussing these doctrines, for such discussions strengthen the mind's attachment to Sri Krishna. I know Sri Chaitanya's glories

through my study of all these teachings and have become strong and fixed in attachment to Him through the knowledge of His greatness." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.2.117-8)

Svarupa Damodara also said:

rasabhasa hay a jadi siddhanta-virodha sahite na pare prabhu mane haya krodha

"If any statement contains perverted reflections of the transcendental aesthetic or goes against the doctrines of the *Bhagavatam*, Mahaprabhu finds it intolerable and becomes angry." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.5.97)

jadba-tadba kavira vakye haya rasabhasa siddhanta-viruddha smite na haya ullasa rasa rasabhasa jara nahika vicara bhakti-siddhanta-sindhu nahi paya para

"Some poets think they can write anything that pleases them. In their writings there is usually an incorrect presentation of the divine loving relationships. There is no pleasure in hearing words which are contrary to the scriptural conclusions. Anyone who cannot distinguish between the genuine sacred aesthetic and its reflection will never be able to cross the ocean of scriptural conclusions which lead to devotional service." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.5.102-3)

Only Listening To The Bhagavatam With Full Attention Will Produce Results

Even after an aspirant to spiritual life has attained the company of devotees and hears the *Bhagavatam* in their association, he must still be careful to hear it in the proper manner. Otherwise he will not get the full result of this powerful devotional activity. The instructive tale of Gokarna is found in the section of *Padma Purana* known as "The Glories of the *SrimadBhagavatam*" (*Bhagavata-mahatmya*). Gokarna was the adopted son of the brahmin Atmadeva and his wife Dhunahuli. Dhundhuli and her husband also raised her sister's child Dhundhukari, who unfortunately was very wicked. Because of his sinful life, when Dhundhukari died he became a ghost and haunted his family's village. Out of compassion for his stepbrother, Gokarna recited the entire 12 cantos of the *Bhagavatam* over a period of seven days and, when it was over, Dhundhukari was liberated from his ghostly body. Where he had previously been invisible, he suddenly appeared before the entire assembly of devotees in a

wonderful form, described in the *Bhagavata-mahatmya* as follows:

divya-rupa-dharo jatas tulasi-dama-manditah pitavasa ghana-syamo mukuti kundalanvitah

"Dhundhukari manifested before them in a marvelous, beautiful deep blue-colored form, garlanded with tulasi leaves and wearing a yellow cloth, a jeweled crown, and earrings." (*Bhagavata-mahatmya* 5.51)

Dhundhukari prostrated himself before his stepbrother and thanked him sincerely for having recited the entire *Bhagavatam* for his benefit. As he was himself energetically glorifying the seven-day recital of the *Bhagavatam*, a marvelous celestial carriage, attended by residents of the Vaikuntha world, descended into the midst of the assembly, brightening the surroundings with their effulgence. Before the eyes of the amazed spectators, Dhundhukari boarded the lustrous carriage. Before leaving, however, Gokarna asked the denizens of Vaikuntha the following important question:

atraiva bahavah santi srotaro mama nirmalah amtani vimanani na tesam yugapat kutah

sravanam samabhagena sarvesam iha drsyate phala-bhedah kuto jatah prabruvantu hari-priyah

"There were many people in the audience who were purified by listening to the *Bhagavatam* recital. Why then were celestial carriages not brought for all of them? I observed them all participating equally in the act of hearing. Please explain, O beloved of Hari, why there is a difference in the results they have gotten?"

(*Bhagavata-mahatmya* 5.69-70)

The associates of the Lord answered by speaking the following verses:

sravanasya vibhedena phala-bhedo'tra samsthitah sravanam tu krtam sarvair na tatha mananam krtam phala-bhedas tato jato bhajanad api manada

"The difference in results comes of the differences in the quality of their hearing. Everyone present, it is true, listened to the *Bhagavatam*, but not everyone reflected on what they had heard. The difference in results came from this, as

well as from the quality of their worship, O respectful one." (*Bhagavata-mahatmya* 5.71)

sapta-ratram upasyaiva pretena sravanam krtam mananadi tatha tena sthira-citte krtam bhramam

adrdham ca hatam jnanam pramadena hatam srutam sandigdho hi hato mantram vyagra-citto hato japah

avaisnavo hato deso hatam sraddham apatram hatam asrotriye danam anacaram hatam kulam

visvaso guru-vakyesu svasmin dinatve-bhavana mano-dosa-jayas caiva kathayam niscalam matih

evam adi krtam cet syat tada vai sravane phalam punah sravante sarvesam vaikunthe vasatir dhruvam

gokarna tava govindo golokam dasyati svayam

"The ghost listened for seven days, but each night he worshiped the Lord, during which time he reflected with concentration on what he had heard. Knowledge which is unstable is lost, as is the learning of someone who has been inattentive. *Japa* done without concentration or hearing advice which comes from a doubtful source are both wasted. A land without Vaishnavas is worthless, as is the offering of oblations by a person without qualifications, charity given to an unlearned person, and a family which has no ethical principles. In order to obtain the fruits of hearing the *Bhagavatam*, one should have faith in the words of the spiritual master and an attitude of humility about his own worth; he should be victorious over the flaws of the mind and have unswerving concentration on the topics he is hearing.

"When all these people hear the *Bhagavatam* a second time, they too will gain eternal residence in Vaikuntha, of this there is no doubt. As for you, Gokarna, Govinda will personally take you to Goloka, the abode of the cows" (*Bhagavata-mahatmya* 5.72-77)

After thus speaking to Gokarna, the associates of Lord Hari began to loudly sing the Lord's names, ascending to Vaikuntha with the transformed Dhundhukari.

In the following month of Sravana, Gokarna undertook a second *Bhagavata-saptaha*. The same audience was again present, but this time they listened more carefully than they had previously. At the end of the week, there was the most wonderful epiphany. Sri Hari Himself descended into the assembly, surrounded by innumerable associates in innumerable celestial carriages. The sounds of prayer and glorification resounded in every direction. Even Lord Hari Himself added to the auspicious cacophony by blowing the conch Pancajanya, which He always holds in His hand. The Lord then embraced Gokarna tightly, transforming the devotee who took the dark form of a Vaikuntha resident with four arms, yellow silk dress, and jeweled crown and earrings. Instantly, everyone in the assembly was similarly transformed. Even other creatures and lower-caste residents of the village were also transformed into divine beings and, as a result of Gokarna's mercy, were given places in the celestial carriages and taken to the transcendental abode sought after by the great yogis. The Lord of the cows, Gopala, took His dearest devotee Gokarna, with Him to His own abode of Goloka.

One may perform penances for many lifetimes and not obtain residence in Goloka Vaikuntha—the fruit of listening to the *Bhagavatam* for a single week. Just as all the citizens of Ayodhya were taken by Ramacandra to Saketa in Vaikuntha, by the Lord's mercy, anyone who listens to the *Bhagavatam* will be taken to His transcendental abode, for the mercy of Sri Krishna is present in the account of His pastimes found therein. One who recites the *Bhagavatam* as well as those who listen to it will have the great fortune of obtaining this divine reward.

The Importance Of Reflection

The second verse of the *SrimadBhagavatam's mahgalacarana* (auspicious invocation) serves as the *vastu-nirdesa*, or indication of the book's subject matter. There it is said, *isvarah sadyo hrady avarudhyate'tra krtibhih susrusubhis tat-ksanat*: "The Lord described in the Bhagavatam appears in the pure heart of the pious listener and remains there from the moment he starts to listen to its recital." On the other hand, as the commentator explains, *akrtibhis tu bahu-vilambane*—the impious may listen to the *Bhagavatam* for a long time without ever obtaining the same result.

Krishna states in the *Bhagavad-gita*:

mayy eva mana adhatsva mayi buddhim nivesaya nivasisyasi mayy eva ata urdhvam na samsayah

"Just fix your mind upon Me alone; engage all your intelligence in Me. Thus, without a doubt you will reside in Me forever, even after death." (*Gita* 12.8)

In this interpretation of this verse, Visvanatha Cakravarti writes: "Just fix your mind by always remembering and meditating on Me, the black and beautiful cowherd boy dressed in yellow silks and garlanded with forest flowers. Engage your intelligence, your power of discrimination, in Me; in other words, reflect on Me. By reflection (*manana*), I mean studying the various words of the scripture which encourage and induce you to meditate on Me. Then you will reside in Me, by which I mean that you will dwell with Me in My abode."¹

The word *manana* means to reflect on the subjects which one has heard or read about, along with their meaning. Without this kind of reflection, hearing alone is incomplete and ineffective.

yad-anudhyasina yuktah karma-granthi-nibandhanam chindanti kovidas tasya ko na kuryat katha-ratim

"Those who are expert cut through the binding knots of reactionary work with the sword of constant meditation on the Lord. Who then will not adore the discussion of His topics?" (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.2.15)

The above verse from the *Bhagavatam* compares the constant meditation on the Lord to a sword with which one can cut through the entanglement of activities arising out of false ego, and their results. This means that such constant remembrance destroys one's tendency to egocentric sense enjoyment. Constant remembrance (*anudhyana*) means reflecting on the topics after (*anu*) one has heard them from the mouths of the guru and the Vaishnavas. This again confirms that simply hearing or studying scriptures without reflecting on what one has read cannot possibly bring the desired results.

Devotion Is Needed To Understand The Bhagavatam

The *Srimad Bhagavatam* is the essence of all scriptures and the emperor of all literature. The Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu, *Chaitanya Charitamrta*, *Sat-sandarbha*, *Brhad-bhagavatamrta*, *Brhad-vaisnava-tosani*, *Laghu-vaisnava-tosani*, *Bhavartha-dipika*, *Sarartha-darsini*, and other works are explanations of the

Bhagavatam. One should study this literature through the disciplic succession by humbly submitting to a spiritual master, asking appropriate questions and maintaining a service attitude. Insight into the practice of devotional service, by which one makes real progress in worshiping the Lord, cannot result without such an approach.

As stated before, the *Bhagavatam* can be understood only by devotion and not by the exercise of intelligence or by the study of many commentaries (*bhaktya bhagavatam grahyam na buddhya na ca tikaya*). No amount of mundane speculation or scholarship can help one understand the divine mood of the *Bhagavatam*. One has to take shelter of the process of devotional service as taught by the pure devotees of the Lord; this is the only way one will be able to enter into its mysteries. One should study the *Bhagavatam* constantly, approaching it with single-minded devotion. As he does so, the Lord Himself becomes imprisoned in his heart.

The devotee's heart is filled with the pure desire to bring pleasure to Krishna's senses alone; thus, it is the Lord's favored resting place. Thus Narottama dasa Thakura has sung:

bhaktera hrdaye govindera satata visrama govinda kahena mama bhakta se parana

"Govinda constantly remains in the heart of His devotee. He says, 'My devotee is My life.'" (*Prarthana*)

The conclusion is a serious aspirant of pure devotion needs to take shelter of a *matha* where he can cultivate knowledge of the devotional scriptures in the association of pure devotees.

CHAPTER 12 CONTROLLING THE MIND

In the *Vedanta-sara*¹ it is written that the inner self (*antahkarana*) is composed of mind, intelligence, ego, and *citta* (*mano buddhir ahamkaras cittam karanam antaram*). Intellect (*buddhi*) is the aspect of the internal self (*antahkarana*) that establishes certainty, while the mind (*manas*) is the aspect of the internal self whose function is to accept and reject.

The word *citta* is the past passive participle of the verb root *cit*, which means "to know," or "to be conscious." Thus, *citta* is that aspect of the internal organ by which one becomes conscious of oneself, or that by which awareness develops. It is thus synonymous with mind, as stated by Sayana in his commentary to *Rgveda* (1.163.11): "Your *citta* is like the gliding wind," (*tava cittam vata iva dhrajimanah*).

In Sanskrit, there are numerous words used as synonyms for "mind" (*manas*), including *citta*, *cetas*, *hrt*, *hrdaya* ("heart"), *svanta* ("inner self"), *anarigaka* ("limbless"), and sometimes, *anga* ("limb").

The word *manas* is defined as follows; "The mind is that by which things are perceived or recognized (*manute budhyate'neneti manah*)." It is one of the elements of the subtle body, or *linga-sarira*. This subtle body has 17 different elements: the five knowledge-gathering senses, the five working senses, the five airs, mind, and intelligence.

The *Vedanta-sara* also gives the following definition of the mind (*manas*):

mano nama sankalpa-vikalpatmika'ntahkarana-vrttih manas tu jnanendriyaih sahitam sat mano-maya-koso bhavati

"The mind is the function of the internal self dealing with decision (*sankalpa*) and indecision (*vikalpa*). Along with the knowledge-gathering senses (*jnanendriya*), it forms the sheath of mind (*mano-maya-kosa*)." (*Vedanta-sara* 62,68)

The mind is considered to be one of the working senses, and one of the

knowledge-gathering senses. Because it depends on the eyes and other knowledge-gathering senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell), it is considered to be one of them. On the other hand, because it is the director of the other working senses (speech, hands, feet, reproductive organs, and excretory organs), it can be also listed among these.

The senses of knowledge (such as sight) pick up general impressions of external objects, and the mind then supplies particulars. Thus the mind is called *sankalpatmaka*, which means the act of choosing or deciding (*vivecana*). In other words, the mind is constantly sifting through the data it receives through the senses, accepting or rejecting what it gathers.

One of the many transformations of the mode of goodness (*sattva-guna*) is the mind. Nature's first transformation or manifestation is the Mahat-tattva. In the *Sankhya-karika* it is stated that mind arises out of the Mahat-tattva (*mahad-akhyam adyam karyam tanmanah*)(1.71).

The Mind According To Lord Kapiladeva

In the third canto of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Lord Kapiladeva instructs his mother Devahuti in the theistic Sankhya philosophy. Some of His teachings about the mind are in many respects similar to the description given in the *Sankhya-karika*. Kapila teaches that the mind is one of the four functions of the inner self, or *antahkarana*. These four functions are known as citta ("contaminated consciousness"), *ahankara* (ego), *buddhi* (intelligence), and *manas* (mind). According to Lord Kapila, the Mahat-tattva manifests within the body as the four-fold inner organ, first as the contaminated consciousness, then as the ego, then intelligence, and finally as the mind (*SrimadBhagavatam* 3.26.14).

For the sake of purifying these elements, the four deities of the Caturvyuha accept the position of presiding over them. Vasudeva is thus the *adhisthatr-devata*, or presiding deity of citta, Sankarsana of *ahankara*, Pradyumna of *buddhi*, and Aniruddha of *manas*. On the material level, the following deities preside over the same subtle elements: Vishnu, Rudra, Brahma, and Candra. (See also *Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.26.21, commentary of Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura).

According to the Sankhya system, there are five great elements (*maha-bhuta*):

air, earth, water, fire, and ether, which evolve into the five sense objects: odor, flavor, sight, touch, and sound. These are followed by five corresponding senses of knowledge namely, smell, taste, vision, feeling, and hearing, and the five working senses: speech, hands, feet, excretory organs, and reproductive organs.

The sum of the four subtle senses of the internal self (ego, mind, intelligence, and consciousness) is 24 elements, or *tattvas*. To these, time (*kala*) is sometimes added, bringing the total to 25. A further calculation then adds the individual living entity, the *jiva*, nature itself (*prakrti*), and the Supersoul (the *purusa*), as further elements, their total amounting to 28.

The twenty-fifth element, time, indicates the Supreme Person's action that sets material nature (as yet undifferentiated by the actions of the three modes) into motion. The word *kala* itself is derived from the verb root *kal*, which means "to impel," or "to incite." It is said that time is the might of God. The same aspect of the Supreme Lord that, out of His own potency, acts as the Supersoul, dwelling in the heart of every sentient creature, is fully present externally, ruling over the 24 elements of the material creation in the form of time.

Outside the perception of the individual souls with their minute awareness, the Supreme Lord's prowess, in the form of time, sets the three modes of material nature in action. At that moment, He places the individual souls into material nature. This process is explained by the Lord Himself in the *Bhagavad-gita* where He states:

*mama yonir mahad brahma tasmin garbham dadamy aham sambhavah sarva-
bhutanam tato bhavati bharata*

"The total material nature, also known as Brahman, is impregnated by Me, with the living beings; thus I make their embodied existence possible." (*Gita* 14.3)

After being impregnated by the Lord, the material energy brings forth the Mahat-tattva in an effulgent golden form. This Mahat-tattva then undergoes various transformations caused by the effects of the three modes of nature namely purity (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*), and darkness (*tamas*), and as a result of these transformations, three corresponding types of ego endowed with acting capacity come into being. Mind is a by-product of ego in the mode of goodness, the ten senses are the by-products of ego in the mode of passion, the five sense objects and the five gross elements are the products of the ego in the mode of

darkness. The second of the Purusas, Sankarsana, who is also known as Anantadeva, is said by scholars to be the cause of the mind, the senses, and the five primary elements. (See also *Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.26.23-25)

The mind is the by-product of the action of ego in the mode of goodness on the Mahat-tattva. The mind's function is to accept and reject. The operation of this function results in desire. Intelligence (*buddhi*) is a byproduct of the *rajasika* ego; in its elemental form, intelligence is the recognition of things (*dravya-sphurana-vijnanam*) and as such it acts as an aid to the senses (*indriyanam anugraha*).

When the aspect of material ego in the mode of darkness is set into motion by the Lord's prowess in the form of time, the five sense objects (odor, flavor, sight, touch, and sound) come into being. From these, the five great elements devolve. The universe, in its entire microcosmic and macrocosmic manifestations, is the result of the interactions of all these elements. However, if the Supreme Soul was not present within everything at creation, nothing would be created and nothing maintained.

The material body is known as the field, and the living entity who dwells within the body is called the knower of the field. The Supreme Lord, however, is omniscient and omnipotent, the knower of all fields in every one of the infinity of universes. Thus, if one does not establish a relationship with Him, there is no possibility of any true self-purification taking place.

The Mind, The Self, And The Supreme Self

The mind should not be mistaken for the self. The spiritual being, or soul, should not be misidentified with the mind. While the soul is a spark of the conscious spiritual energy, the mind merely reflects this consciousness. The mind depends on the presence of the jiva soul in order to function; it has no independent existence. We can speak about "my mind," but we never hear anyone saying, "I am the mind." The self is the observer and the mind is the observed. Therefore the self should be understood as categorically different from the mind.

The soul is composed of consciousness, the mind of unconscious matter. Consciousness is selfilluminating, while matter has no power to illuminate. The logicians say, "The soul becomes connected to the mind, the mind to the senses,

the senses to the sense object. Therefore, it is through this process that knowledge is acquired" (*atma manasa yunjate mana indriyena, indriyam visayena, tasmad adhyaksa ity-ukta-disa jnanam jayate — Nyayadarsana*).

Without consciousness as their support, the senses cannot acquire knowledge of any sense object. Therefore, the soul itself acts as the director, first coming into contact with the mind, which then acts through the senses to contact the sense objects. Thus, through the mind, the self not only gains knowledge but also experiences material happiness and distress. Without the mind, the self would be unaware of sensual happiness or distress. Thus, the *Nyaya-vritti* states: "The mind is the sense which is capable of comprehending happiness and distress" (*sukhady-upalabdhi-sadhanam indriyam manah*).

By contrast, in the *Bhagavad-gita* (2.24) Krishna says that the *jiva* soul is everlasting, capable of migrating in all species, fixed, immovable, and beginningless (*nityah sarvagatah sthanur acalo'yam sanatanah*). The soul is unborn, forever changeless, free from decay, and free from the sixfold transformations of matter; it is not killed when the body is killed (*Gita 2.20: ajo nityah sasvato'yampurano na hanyate hanyamane sarire*).

This individual self or soul is also eternally related with the Supreme Soul, the Paramatma. There are many, many verses in the *Bhagavad-gita* that distinguish the individual soul from his eternal master, the Supreme Lord. The Lord Himself says: "I am the primeval origin of all the celestial beings and great sages." (*Gita 10.2—aham adir hi devanam maharsinam ca sarvasah*; "He who knows Me to be birthless, the origin of everything, and the Supreme Lord of all beings..." (*yo mam ajam anadim ca vetti loka-mahesvaram—Gita 10.3*); "I am the root cause of all things and everything comes from Me." (*aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah sarvam pravartate—Gita 10.8*); "I alone am the cause of generation of the whole world, and the cause of its dissolution as well" (*aham krisnasya jagatah prabhavam pralayas tatha—Gita 7.6*); "I am the father of this universe, the mother, the bestower of the fruits of all actions, the forefather, and the object of all knowledge" (*pitaham asya jagato mata dhatapitamahah — Gita 9.17*).

*mattah parataram nanyat kincid asti dhananjaya mayi sarvam idam
protam sutre mam-gana iva*

"O Arjuna! There is nothing superior to Me. Like gems strung on a thread, this

entire creation depends on Me."(Gita 7.7)

gatir bharta prabhuh saksi nivasah saranam suhrt

prabhavah pralayah sthanam nidhanarh bijam avyayam

"And certainly I am everyone's goal, maintainer, controller, witness, refuge, guardian, and unconditional well-wisher. I am creation, dissolution, and sustenance. I am the reservoir and the seed, the eternal Supreme Person." (Gita 9.18)

Arjuna also responded by confirming the statements of the Lord:

*param brahma param dhama pavitram paramam bhavan purusam sasvatam
divyam adidevam ajam vibhum*

*ahus tvam rsayah sarve devarsir narada tatha asito devalo vyasah svayam caiva
bravisi me*

"O Lord, You are the Supreme prominent sages such as Devarsi illuminating, self-manifest eternal

Absolute Truth, the supreme shelter, and the supreme savior. All the Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyasa have described You as the selfSupreme Person, the foundation of almighty majesty, and the origin from whose divine play everything emanates—and now You are personally declaring this to me." (Gita 10.12-13)

*svayam evatmanatmanam vettha tvam purusottama bhuta-bhavana
bhutesa devadeva jagatpate*

"O Supreme Person, O universal father, O Lord of all beings, Lord of all gods, Lord of the universe! You alone can truly know Yourself through Your own divine cognizant potency." (Gita 10.15)

Following the conclusions of the *Upanishads* the *Bhagavad-gita* further states:

*nityo nityanam cetanas cetananam eko bahunam vidadhati kaman ye atmastham
anupasyanti dhira tesam santih sasvati netaresam*

"There is a single Supreme Eternal Being among all eternal beings; a single supremely conscious entity among all conscious entities. He is the one who fulfills the desires of the many. Sages who constantly meditate upon Him, seated on His throne, shall attain everlasting perfection; others shall not." (*Katha* 2.2.13 and *Svet* 6.13)

The distinction between the Supreme and individual souls is further clarified in the two following verses from the *Mundaka* (3.1.1-2) and *Svetasvatara Upanishads* (4.6-7):

*dva suparna sayuja sakhaya samanam vrksam parisasvajate tayor anyah
pippalam svadv atty anasnann anyo 'bhicakasiti*

*samane vrkse puruso nimagno 'nisaya socati muhyamanah justam yada pasyaty
anyam isam*

"Two fair-plumed friends sit in the same tree. One eats the tree's sweet berries while the other only observes. In the same way, in the tree of the body, the individual soul sits bewildered, constantly and helplessly grieving. When he wisely turns to his friend (who is always served by the devotees), looking upon Him as his Lord, he gives up his suffering and realizes his glorious birthright."

The loving relationship between the Supreme Soul and the individual soul is also eternal. Thus Krishna, the supreme knower of the Veda, the ultimate object of Vedic knowledge, and the original author of the Vedanta, lovingly spoke His most confidential teachings and the essence of all religion to His dear friend Arjuna as follows:

*man-mana bhava mad-bhakto mad-yaji mam namaskuru mam evaisyasi satyam
te pratijane priyo'si me*

"Always think of Me, worship Me by engaging in the devotional services of hearing and chanting, serve Me in My deity form, offer your very being unto Me, and you will surely reach Me. This is My sincere promise to you because you are My dear friend." (Gita 18.65)

*sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja aham tvam sarva-
papebhyo moksayisyami ma sucah*

"Abandoning all religious observances related to the *varnasrama* system, giving

up the worship of all demigods related to those religious activities, surrender exclusively unto Me. You need have no fear of any ill effects resulting from not performing the permanent and periodical duties enjoined in the Vedic literature, even though these were ultimately dictated by Me. I will liberate you from any sins or impediments resulting from such neglect; do not despair. I hereby promise that anyone who surrenders to Me is freed from sin, is liberated from the cycle of repeated birth and death, and receives all that is needed to attain Me." (*Gita 18.66*)

Elsewhere in the *Gita*, Krishna makes a similar promise:

ananyas cintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate tesam nityabhiyuktanam yoga-ksemam vahamy aham

"I personally assume the whole responsibility of acquiring and protecting the necessities of My fully dependent devotees. They are always absorbed in thought of Me alone and worship Me exclusively; want nothing but to be united with Me forever." (9.22)

The Lord is so affectionate to His exclusive devotees that He voluntarily takes responsibility for bodily maintenance, taking care of their families as well. He also protects the devotee's *bhajana* as well by eliminating all obstacles to its practice. Then He grants the devotees the perfection of that *bhajana* (which is the treasure of love for Himself) and protects that love. Such is the true extent of the Lord's statement, *yogaksemam vahamy aham*.

The Mind As Friend And As Enemy Of The Self

In the first part of the Lord's above-mentioned instruction, He says, *man-mana bhava*: "Absorb your mind in Me." However, in the process of attaining the treasure of love, the mind acts not only as friend but also as enemy. The *Bhagavata* clearly states that unless one controls one's mind, perfection is impossible.

danam svadharmo niyamo yamas ca

srutam ca karmani ca sad-vratani sarve mano-nigraha-laksanantah paro hi yogo manasah samadhih

"All religious activities such as charity, execution of one's duties, observance of

rules and regulations, study of scripture, sacrifices, and penances, all have the control of the mind as their aim, for concentration of the mind is the supreme (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.23.45)

One must begin the conquest of the mind by practicing that which Krishna calls "the austerity of the mind." In the *Bhagavad-gita* (17.16) this practice is explained by Krishna as follows:

manah-prasadah saumyatvam maunam atma-vinigraha bhava-samsuddhir ity etat tapo manasam ucyate

"Austerity of the mind comprises serenity, simplicity, moderation in speech, self-control by withdrawing from the sense objects, and purity of being through renunciation of deceptive behavior."

Of these, self-control through withdrawal from the sense objects is of great significance. Indeed, Krishna states that no one becomes a yogi without giving up desire for sense gratification. (*Gita* 6.2: *na hy asannyasta-sankalpo yogi bhavati kascana*). Unless one has uprooted gross as well as subtle desires, and renunciations of all kinds, including the desires for sense enjoyment, heavenly pleasures, liberation and mystic powers, one cannot be considered a yogi.

"Only one who has given up all incentive of desire can be said to have ascended to yoga" (*Gita* 6.4: *sarva-sankalpa-samnyasi yogarudhas tadocyate*). In other words, when a purehearted jiva gives up the desire and abhorrence of sense enjoyments, keeping only the desire to serve Krishna for the satisfaction of His senses, can he be elevated to the topmost rung of the yoga ladder.

For this reason, the Lord says:

uddhared atmanatmanam natmanam avasadayet atmaiva hy atmano bandhur atmaiva ripur atmanah

bandhur atmatmanas tasya yenaivatmanajitah anatmanas tu satrutve vartetatmaiva satruvat

"The aspiring yogi should lift himself from the blind well of material life by freeing the mind from attachment to the sense objects. He should not debase it by attachments to the material world. According to different circumstances, the mind is either the friend of the self, or its enemy. That jiva who has conquered

the mind can consider his mind a friend. But the mind is the enemy of one who has not conquered it." (*Gita 6.5-6*)

With the following words Lord Kapiladeva instructs his mother Devahuti:

*cetah khalv asya bandhaya muktaye catmano matam gunesu saktam
bandhaya ratam va pumsi muktaye*

"My dear mother, the mind alone is the cause of the *jiva's* bondage as well as the *jiva's* liberation. When the mind is attached to the senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) and the sense objects (form, sound, odor, flavor, and feeling), the living entity enters into bondage. When the same mind is attached to the Supreme Person, he is liberated." (*SrimadBhagavatam 3.25.15*)

Krishna explains the same thing more directly to Uddhava:

*visayan dhydyatas cittam visayesv anusajjate mam anusmaratas cittam mayy eva
praviliyate*

"The mind which dwells on sense objects becomes attached to sense objects. The mind which constantly remembers Me becomes absorbed in Me." (*Srimad Bhagavatam 11.14.27*)

It is thus evident that as soon as the mind is absorbed in devotion to the Lord, it becomes truly pure and holy and a true friend to the.

Five Stages Of Mind Control According To Yoga Sutras

The great sage Patanjali, the author of the *Yoga Sutra*, has written that the meaning of yoga is to stop the activities of the mind (*yogas citta-vrtti-nirodhah, 1.2*). It is impossible to achieve yoga unless one first controls the activities of the mind. Yoga psychology describes five basic states of mind — *ksipta* (disturbed), *mudha* (bewildered), *viksipta* (distracted), *ekagra* (concentrated), and *niruddha* (controlled).

(1) When the mind is unsteady and flickering, it is said to be disturbed (*ksipta*). When one desires things other than Krishna, the mind finds it impossible to remain fixed exclusively on Him. Rather, it flitters from one subject to another, wishing first for some sense object and then for another. In this way it remains unsteady.

(2) The mind may be confused about what to do or not to do, and as a result one is overcome with desire, anger or other manifestations of the mode of passion; or sleep, drowsiness and laziness or other manifestations of the mode of ignorance. This is called the bewildered state of the mind.

(3) The state of being disturbed (*ksiptavastha*) described above, and the distracted state (*viksipta*) are quite similar in many respects. However, a difference between them is that from time to time, in the *viksipta* state, there are occasional moments of calm and steadiness even within the general overall picture of inability to concentrate.

(4) When the mind becomes fixed on some external or internal object, and thus becomes as steady as a flame in a windless room; when it has overcome the modes of ignorance and passion and is situated in goodness, it develops the power of single-minded concentration, which is called *ekagrata*.

(5) In the stage of concentration, *ekagrata*, the mind is still dependent on something external to itself, but in the fully controlled state (*niruddha*), there is no longer dependency. The mind regains its causal nature and remains inactive as though it had achieved its purpose and had no need of further action. Like a burnt thread, it shows the lines of its previous characteristics, but is not negatively affected by them. In this controlled state, the self is fixed in its true nature. At other times, the self identifies with the activities of the mind and thus takes on various identities.

Devotional scriptures tell us that the *jiva's* eternal nature (as Krishna's marginal energy) is to be the servant of the Lord. As one of His energies the *jivas* are simultaneously one and different from Him (*jivera svarapa haya nitya krsna-dasa krsna-tatastha sakti bhedabheda-prakasa*). When situated in this natural constitutional position, the mind has no function other than to seek out Krishna. The living entity is then constantly engaged in the culture of Krishna consciousness and the mind then acts as his friend.

The Actual Purpose Of The Mental Function

In his teachings to Maitreyi, Yajnavalkya describes four practices which lead to control of the mind: "The atman is to be seen, to be listened to, to be reflected on, and to be contemplated" (*atma va are drastavyah srotavyo mantavyo nidadhyasitavyah—Brhad-aranyaka Upanishad, 4.5.6*).

From this statement it is understood that the first duty of the mind is to seek out the Supreme Self. One should therefore use the mind to seek out Vasudeva, the mind's own titular deity, and never other sense objects. As instructed to Maitreyi, one should look at and listen to things related to Krishna, then reflect on and contemplate those things, as well as Krishna Himself. Not following these instructions will cause one to miss the actual purpose of mental functions. In such an instance, the mind becomes the principal enemy of the soul.

If one wishes to know the Supreme Truth, it is absolutely essential that one take shelter of a spiritual master and hear from him. The spiritual master is non-different from the Supreme Truth; a manifest expansion, or *prakasa-vingraha*, of that Truth. Thus he can show the truth—Lord Krishna's lotus feet—to his surrendered disciple. He shows the disciple the means by which the vision of the Lord can be attained. Therefore one should first prostrate himself before the guru and then submissively ask him about the nature of the self, the nature of God, the goal of life and the means of attaining it, and the nature of *maya*, or the forces which oppose the attaining of spiritual understanding.

The disciple should approach the spiritual master in a spirit of service. It is imperative that the disciple listen submissively to the directions given by the spiritual master, then, by reflection, follow up such hearing. The word *manana* means reflection, or assiduous meditation on the subject matter that has been heard from the spiritual master. It also means determination, i.e., the power to determine the nature of things. Vijnana Bhikshu writes in his works on Sarikhya philosophy that the self should be heard in accordance with the words of the revealed literature, and should be reflected on according to their proofs and arguments (*srotavyah sruti-vakyebhyo mantavyas copapattibhih*). By this process, one comes to determine the true meaning of the words registered in the scriptures.

The *Gayatri-tantra* (1.4) states:

*mananat papatas trati mananat svargam asnute mananat moksam apnoti
caturvargamayo bhavet*

"One is delivered from sin through reflection. One enjoys heaven through reflection. One attains liberation and all the goals of human life through reflection."

A pure devotee will naturally engage in the kind of reflection that results in pure devotional service. The importance of reflecting on what one has heard is specifically connected with the importance of listening to the *Bhagavata*. We saw in a previous chapter how Dhundhuli was taken by a group of divine beings to the Vaikuntha planets after hearing Gokarna recite the entire *Bhagavatam* for over a seven-day period. Other people in the audience were, not similarly rewarded because they had not reflected deeply on what they heard. The ghost Dhundhuli fasted each day for the entire week and listened to Gokarna with great concentration and faith. Just as importantly, throughout the night he contemplated the subject matter of the day's recital. Thus he was rewarded with the attainment of the full results of listening to the *Bhagavata*. Accordingly, the *Bhagavatam* states, *sadyo hr̥dy avarudhyate'tra krtibhih susrusubhis tat-ksanat* (*SrimadBhagavatam* 1.1.2): "The Lord becomes bound up in the heart of the pious devotees the very moment they desire to hear about Him."

Therefore the first step in controlling the mind is to listen to the *Bhagavatam* with strong faith in the guru, attentiveness and care, concentration and patience. If there is inattention and carelessness, the true fruit of hearing will not be achieved.

Abhyasa-yoga

The fourth function of the mind described by Yajnavalkya to Maitreyi is *nididhyasana*, or "profound and repeated meditation." In his commentaries on *Bhagavad-gita's* twelfth chapter, Visvanatha Cakravarti writes that *bhakti* is of two types; it is performed 1) by dedicating the inner senses to the Lord, and 2) by dedicating the external senses to Him, i.e., by engaging in unlimited devotional activities like hearing and chanting about the Lord's attributes, pastimes, name, and form as well as praying to Him; glorifying Him; and engaging in such practices as worshipping His deity form, cleaning the temple, and picking flowers for His service, this last practice being accessible to everyone.

Bhakti performed by the internal senses is of three kinds: remembering the Lord (*smarana*), reflecting on Him (*manana*) and — for those who are attached to the Lord but unable to remember Him uninterruptedly— practicing control of the mind (*abhyasa*). All three of these mental disciplines of the devotional path are more difficult for one lacking pure will, than for those who are intelligent and free from an offensive mentality. Reflection is better than external practices; but

constant and direct remembrance is superior to reflection. One engaged in external devotional practices should still make added efforts to meditate on the Lord, for external practices are meant to remind one of the Lord and from there lead to reflection, which once achieved, allows for one's easy engagement in constant meditation.

In the following instructions given in the *Bhagavad-gita*, Krishna emphasizes the importance of the mental aspect of devotional service:

*mayy eva mana adhatsva mayi buddhim nivesaya nivasisyasi mayy eva ata
urdhvam na samsayah*

"Dedicate your mind exclusively to Me, O Arjuna. Fix your intelligence in Me, and as a result, you will definitely reside with Me after death. Of this there is no doubt." (*Gita* 12.8)

In his *Sarartha-darsini* commentary to this verse, Visvanatha writes: "When Krishna says *mayy eva*, the emphatic participle *eva* prohibits us from meditating on the impersonal aspect of the Lord. When He says 'upon Me' (*mayi*), He refers to His beautiful blackish form dressed in yellow silk and garlanded with forest flowers. The words *mana adhatsva*, 'dedicate your mind,' an instruction to constantly remember Him. To fix one's intelligence in Him means to use one's powers of discrimination in understanding Him, in other words, to reflect (*manana*) on Him. Such reflection means to study the words of scripture that help awaken the tendency to meditate on Him (*tac ca mananam dhyana-pratipadaka-sastra-vakyanusilanam*). In following these instructions one comes to live with the Lord in His abode; of this there can be no doubt."

In the following verse, the Lord states:

*atha cittam samadhatum na saknosi mayi sthiram abhyasa-yogena tato mam
icchaptum dhananjaya*

"O Dhananjaya, if you cannot establish your mind in Me with firm faith, alternatively try to reach Me by the practice (*abhyasa-yogena*) of repeated meditation on Me." (*Gita* 12.9)

In regard to the words *abhyasa-yogena*, Visvanatha makes the following comments: "Repeatedly bringing the mind back from wherever it wanders and fixing it on the form of the Lord is called practice; and that alone is the yogic

discipline" (*anyatranyatra-gatam api manah punah punah pratyahrtya mad-rupa eva sthapanam abhyasah sa eva yogah*).

In the *Gita's* sixth chapter Krishna explains the practice of yoga meditation to Arjuna. Still bewildered, Arjuna submitted the following question: "Lord, You tell Me to control my mind with the help of the powers of discrimination, or intelligence, but I find that the mind is so powerful that it confuses even my powers of intelligence. I think it easier to capture the wind than to control the mind—it is too difficult for me." In answer, Krishna assured Arjuna that, through repeated practice (*abhyasena*) and renunciation (*vairagyena*) it is possible to conquer the restless mind.

Visvanatha comments on this verse as follows: "Although fickle and exceedingly difficult to control, the mind should be engaged in the constant discipline of cultivation of consciousness of the Supreme Lord (*sad-gurupadista-prakarena paramesvara-dhyana-yogasya muhur anusilanena*), and renunciation and detachment from the sense objects (*visayesv anasarigena*) by the means and practices given by the spiritual master. This has been confirmed by no less an authority than Patanjali, who states in his Yoga Sutras (1.12): "Practice and detachment are the means by which to still the mind (*abhyasa-vairagya bhyam tan-nirodhah*)."

Conquering The Mind With Higher Intelligence

The process of degradation of the mind is described in the *Bhagavad-gita* (2.62-63) as follows: First the mind comes in contact with the sense objects and begins to intensely desire to enjoy them. This desire for enjoyment is called lust, from which anger arises. Anger leads to bewilderment; loss of ability to discriminate between proper and improper action. This bewilderment leads to forgetfulness of one's true good as described in scripture.. Such forgetfulness leads to the destruction of one's resolute intelligence (*vyavasayatmika buddhi*). Finally the *jiva* falls into the blind well of material existence.

In the *Gita* (16.2), Krishna names lust, anger, and greed as the three doors leading to hell, and advises the *jivas* to be particularly on guard against them. In the *Gita's* third chapter, Krishna instructs Arjuna on how to overcome lust and anger. There, Arjuna asks Krishna, "By what is one impelled to sinful acts, even unwillingly, as if engaged by force?"

The Lord answers: "Lust, which is born of the mind and develops out of the mode of passion, causes the living being to engage in sinful activity. Lust is the overriding impulse to engage in sense activities; it causes one to engage in sinful acts and then turns into anger: when one's desires for sense gratification are unsatisfied, lust takes on the characteristics of the mode of ignorance and becomes anger.

"Lust and anger together are the savage and all-devouring foes of the living being. If one is unable to deal with these fearsome enemies, there is no question of one engaging in devotional service to the Lord, or even being worthy to be called a 'human being.' Such a person is inevitably destined to go to the lower, hellish destinations.

"Lust takes up residence in the mind, intelligence, and the senses. Therefore, O Arjuna, in order to overcome this sinful enemy which destroys knowledge and understanding, your first duty is to control your senses. The learned say the senses are superior to the sense objects; mind is stronger than the senses; intelligence is still stronger than the mind; and the soul is even more powerful than the intelligence. Thus the *jivatma* can conquer over lust by controlling the senses. Understanding himself to be transcendental to even the intelligence, the *jivatma* must realize his position beyond matter, his spiritual nature. With this knowledge, the *jivatma* steadies the mind and finally destroys his otherwise unconquerable enemy, lust." (Gita 3.37-43)

In his extended translation of the last of the verses in this section of the *Gita*, Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes, "In this way, being fully aware of your own transcendental spiritual nature, stop thinking of yourself in terms of the material nature, whether with or without attributes. Thus in full knowledge of your own superiority as a pure servant of the Lord, still the unconquerable mind by the power of the spiritual energy and gradually win it over."

Narottama dasa holds that the association of devotees is essential for one who wants to conquer lust, anger, and greed. He sings, "What can lust and anger do to the practitioner who takes shelter of saintly association?" (*kiba se karitepara kama-krodha sadhakere, jadi hay a sadhu-janara sanga*). Jagadananda Pundit similarly writes in his *Prema-vivarta*, "All I want is to chant the Holy Name in the company of devotees. I need nothing else to conquer over the cycle of repeated births and deaths" (*sadhu-sange krsna-nama ei matra cai, samsara jinite ara kono vastu nai*).

Having attained this invaluable human form of life, we must not become the servants of lust and anger and be beaten by the brooms and sticks of *maya*. We must do everything within our power to save ourselves from lust and anger. We should have faith that, on seeing our genuine efforts to become good and holy persons, to have unflagging determination in offering heartfelt prayers at the feet of the spiritual master, the Vaishnavas, and the Lord, surely the Lord will come to our aid. On the other hand, if we allow ourselves to float along the stream of sensual desire, ignoring the instructions of the scriptures, the spiritual master, and the saintly, how then can we expect our lives to amount to anything?

In the *Gita* (2.41), Krishna states that the resolute intellect (*vyavasayatmika buddhi*) is directed to a single goal, while those whose intelligence is irresolute are led by their desires and imagination along unlimited paths leading in different directions. On the devotional path, the intelligence is resolute and has only one purpose.

Visvanatha has paraphrased the words of a devotee possessed of such resolute purpose, "My guru has instructed me to worship the Lord by chanting about Him, by remembering Him and serving His lotus feet. This is my spiritual practice; the goal I must achieve, and my life's nourishment. Whether I reach perfection or remain imperfect, this is the one thing I can never give up. It is my duty; the object of my desire, for even in my dreams I wish for nothing else. Whether it brings me happiness or distress, whether it brings ruin upon me and my family, I do not care."

Visvanatha cites this example as the kind of resolute determination only possible when one is engaged in devotion beyond all self-deception. Such single-minded determination is not possible in any path of spiritual life other than *bhakti*, whether it be *karma-yoga*, *jnana-yoga*, or any other. Instructing Uddhava to have this kind of strong faith and will power in the execution of devotional service, the Lord says, "Be faithful and worship Me with firm conviction" (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 10.20.28).

A Combination Of Divine Grace And Effort

In the *Gita* (7.14), the Lord tells us that other than by surrendering to Him, there is no alternative way of overcoming His divine energy made of the three qualities of goodness, passion, and ignorance. The mind is easily distracted and flickering, but the Lord is the controlling deity of the mind and He Himself

attracts all minds.

*krsir bhū-vacakah sabdo naś ca nirvṛti-vacakah tayor aikyam param brahma
kṛṣṇa ity abhidhīyate*

"The verb root *kṛs* refers to the action of attracting, while the suffix *na* means 'supreme joy'. The Supreme Brahman has been given the name Krishna because He embodies the combination of these two meanings."

How then can any of us find a place at the Lord's lotus feet if He Himself does not drag us there?

Mother Yasoda once became angry with baby Krishna and decided to punish Him by tying Him to a mortar. To her chagrin, she found that the rope was always two inches too short. After making repeated efforts and failing each time, Krishna finally became merciful to her and allowed Himself to be tied up. Visvanatha Cakravarti explains the symbolism of Krishna bound by a rope as follows: "Two things are necessary before the Lord can be bound by a devotee: 1) the devotee must put great effort into his worship; and 2) there must be mercy on the part of the Lord upon seeing such efforts (*bhaktā-niṣṭhā bhajānotiḥa śrāntiś tad-darśānotiḥa sva-niṣṭhā kṛpā ceti dvābhyam eva bhagavan baddhah*). This mercy of the Lord is the most powerful of His energies" (*Sārārthā-darśini*, 10.9.18). Without the combination of the devotee's effort and the Lord's mercy, the rope that binds Him will always be two inches short.

The Lord again speaks of the effort (*yatna*) required to attain Him in verse 9.14 of the *Gīta* (*yātantaś ca drdha-vṛataḥ*). In his *Sārārthā-varṣini* commentary, Visvanatha elaborates on the nature of this effort as follows: "Just as poverty stricken householders go to rich men's doors to obtain money for their families' maintenance, My devotees go to the assembly of surrendered devotees with the sole intention of collecting treasures of devotional service (such as chanting) from them. On acquiring the science of *bhakti* they begin to repeatedly practice the tenets of Bhakti yoga, just like a student trying to learn by rote, (*yathā kutumba-palanārtham dīna-grhasthā dhanika-dvāradau dhanārtham yātante, tathāiva madbhaktāḥ kīrtanādī-bhakti-prāpty-ārtham bhaktā-sabhādau yātante. Prāpya ca bhaktim adhiyamanam sastram pathata iva punah punar abhyasyanti ca.*)

Visvanatha further explains the nature of the devotee's resolution (*draha-vṛataḥ*)

to practice devotional service: "I resolve to daily chant a fixed number of rounds of the Holy Name on my beads and to offer a fixed number of prostrated obeisances to the Lord and the Vaishnavas. I resolve to regularly do such and such a service. I will maintain my unfailing determination to keep the Ekadasi fast and other vows. I will pay special attention to controlling my senses."
(*etavanti nama-grahanani, etavatyah pranatayah, etavatyah paricaryas cavasya-kartavya ity evam drdhani vratani niyama yesam te. yad vd, drdhany apatitany ekadasy-adi-vratani niyama yesam te.*)

The Lord helps those who help themselves. When a devotee makes a vow, the Lord helps him maintain his vow. The *bhakti-yogi* must put aside pride in his own will power and understand all his efforts to be totally dependent on the mercy of the guru, the Vaishnavas, and the Lord. Such a person will soon achieve success.

Rupa Gosvami's Upadesamrta

In his *Upadesamrta* Rupa Gosvami explains that there are six impulses to be controlled by the practitioner. They are the impulses of speech, thought, anger, taste, the belly, and the genitals. When these impulses are strong, the unfortunate jiva finds himself flailing in the ocean of material suffering.

In connection with the urges of the belly and the tongue, it is noticeable that the food we eat influences our mental processes. The *Sankhya-karika* (3.15) reminds us that "according to the *Sruti*, the mind is affected by the food one consumes" (*tad annamayatvam srutes ca*), or, as it is popularly said, "you are what you eat." For this reason, yogis and other *sadhakas* who try to control the mind pay special attention to the types of food they consume.

Although a devotee knows himself to be pure spirit, he does not eat everything indiscriminately. Nor do other yoga practitioners eat without discrimination. And why not? Because if they eat everything without discrimination their performance of yoga will be adversely affected by the food they take. Yogis of all types engage in their practices with a transcendental objective and if they eat the food of sensual, materialistic persons, these person's tendencies will encroach upon their minds. For example, if one eats the food offered by a sexually promiscuous person, then that defect will have an effect on his thought processes. To avoid this problem, devotees only take *mahaprasada*, food first offered to Krishna.

Rupa Gosvami lists six kinds of activities that adversely affect the mind, robbing it of its peace, and interfere with the achievement of devotional perfection:

atyaharah prayasas ca prajalpo niyamagrahah jana-sangas laulyam ca sadbhir bhakir vinasyati

"The following activities cause one's devotion to be destroyed: overeating, overexertion, gossip, overenthusiasm for or neglect of regulations, indiscriminate associating, and greed." (*Upadesamrta* 2)

A devotee's downfall is caused by overconsumption, by seeking to enjoy things other than Krishna, by attachment to discussing mundane topics, by either completely rejecting the scriptural injunctions or being overattached to scriptural rules without taking account of their purpose — to remember Krishna. Downfall also comes from making vows which are beyond one's capacity to maintain. When a devotee tries to make a show in this way, he jumps from the frying pan into the fire (*ito nastas tato bhrastah*). Not only does he fail in his attempts at devotional service, but his efforts at material happiness are defeated as well.

Rupa Gosvami, an ocean of compassion, is distressed by the suffering of others. In his *Upadesamrta*, he mercifully shows how a devotee can increase his devotional wealth.

utsahan niscayad dhairyat tat-tat-karma-pravartanat sariga-tyagat sato vrtteh

"Six attitudes are necessary on the part of the practitioner if bhakti is to reach its perfection. He must have enthusiasm for devotional practice, faith that he will achieve Krishna, patience in the attainment of the goal of *prema*; he must perform devotional activities as they have been given by the previous authorities, avoid bad company, and accept the principles of a saintly life." (*Upadesamrta* 3)

When the *jiva* accepts these positive qualities and rejects the six impulses and six principles unfavorable to bhakti, then he will lead a life of Krishna consciousness.

The mind contaminated by bad association and polluted through constant contact with the sense objects is the source of our troubles. For this reason we must take all care to remain in the association of advanced *sadhus*, struggling to keep

ourselves in the cultivation of Krishna consciousness. Otherwise, we will be engaged in sinfulness and that is like suicide.

The Higher Taste

According to the *Bhagavad-gita*, by experiencing the higher taste of spiritual pleasure one naturally discards the temporary and insignificant pleasures of this world. If the mind is engaged in the culture of Krishna consciousness, it automatically becomes indifferent to other engagements. In the *Bhagavatam* the Lord says to Uddhava:

visayan dhyayatas cittam visayesu visajjate mam anusmaratas cittam mayy eva praviliyate

"The mind which meditates on sense objects becomes attached to sense objects. The mind which constantly remembers Me becomes absorbed in Me." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.14.27)

Indeed, there is no more powerful an agent for self-purification than devotion to Krishna. By providing a higher taste of spiritual ecstasies, pure devotion eliminates all material desires from the heart. Such is the secret to self-purification and control of the mind.

The Lord supplies the conditioned souls with human bodies so they can cross over the ocean of material existence. He then personally comes in the form of the guru to act as the captain of the vessel for crossing over this ocean of material suffering. The winds of Krishna's grace blow abundantly. If, however, the *jivas* do not make sufficient efforts to traverse the waters of *maya* despite all the favorable conditions, they should consider themselves to be the most unfortunate and least intelligent persons in the world. Therefore, in *Srimad Bhagavatam* Sukadeva says to Maharaja Pariksit:

samsara-sindhuh atidustaram uttirasor nanyah plavo bhagavatah purusottamasya lila-katha-rasa-nisevanam antarena pumso bhaved vividha-duhkha-davarditasya

"O king! A person who, suffering the various kinds of miseries in this world, desires to cross over the unlimited ocean of material existence, has no alternative but to take a boat in the form of relishing the joys of hearing Krishna's pastimes." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 12.4.40)

Vyasa begins the *Bhagavatam* with the following verse:

nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phalam suka-mukhad amrta-drava-samyutam pibata bhagavatam rasam alayam muhur aho rasika bhuvi bhavukah

"O devotees! O you who know the transcendental joys of love for the Lord! O you who have attained the wisdom that comes from meditating on your particular relation with the Lord! Even though you are already fully liberated, drink repeatedly the *Bhagavata*, the ripened fruit of the desire tree of the Vedas; no part of it is to be rejected like the skin or seed of a mango. Its juice is pure transcendental bliss; it has come down to us from Sukadeva who first spoke it in its present form. It was then repeated by his disciples and grand-disciples in the disciplic succession. The great liberated souls reject the pleasures of heaven but do not reject the pleasures of the fruit of the Bhagavata, constantly relishing its flavor." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.1.3)

Once the demigods came to Dvaraka where they beheld the Lord and offered Him extensive prayers and praise. Those prayers confirm the exceptional power of devotion to purify the heart.

suddhir nrnam na tu tathedya durasayanam vidya-srutadhyayana-dana-tapah-kriyabhiih sattvatmanam rsabha te yasasi pravrdha-sac-chraddhaya sravana-sambhrtaya yatha syat

"O Worshipable One! O Supreme Person! Devotees engaged in hearing Your glories with a pure and mature faith are more quickly purified than those who harbor personal desires even while worshiping, hearing explanations of the Vedic learning, studying the scriptures, giving in charity, performing penances or engaging in other ritual processes of purification." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.6.9)

With the following words Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati emphasizes the contrast between dry learning and the faithful study of devotional texts: "Hearing the glories of the Lord fills the devotees with ever-increasing faith. It is through such faith that the heart is genuinely purified. Material knowledge and learning simply fill the heart with pride."

However the devotee achieves constant remembrance of Krishna, that remembrance is the true secret of achieving self-purification.

*avismrtih krsna-padaravindayoh ksinoty abhadrani ca sam tanoti sattvasya
suddhim paramatma-bhaktim jnanam ca vijnana-viraga-yuktam*

"The Supreme Lord's lotus feet are the greatest source of auspiciousness. By never forgetting them, all inauspiciousness is destroyed and peace finally settles on the mind. One's being is genuinely purified, devotion to the Lord is awakened, and one attains knowledge combined with realization and renunciation." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 12.12.55)²

In the following verses, Krishna explains to His dear devotee Uddhava important aspects of the process of purification:

*dharmah satyadayopeto vidya vd tapasanvita mad-bhaktyapetam atmanam na ca
samyak punati hi*

"Religious life ruled by truthfulness and other principles, and learning accompanied by self-discipline cannot completely purify one whose heart is devoid of devotion to Lord Hari." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.14.22)

*katham vina romaharsam dravata cetasa vina vinanandasru-kalaya suddhyed
bhaktya vinasayah*

"How can a person's heart be purified without the ecstatic devotion that causes his hair to stand on end, his mind melting with love, and tears flowing from his eyes?" (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.14.23)

*yathagnina hema-malam jahati smatam punah svam bhajate ca rupam atma ca
karmanusayam vidhuya mad-bhakti-yogena bhajaty atho mam*

"Just as heated gold is freed of its impurities and retrieves its natural brightness, so does the soul become purified of its accumulated karmic reactions through Bhakti yoga. When one is thus purified and regains his natural identity, he worships Me." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.14.25)

*yatha yathatma parimrjyate'sau mat-punya-gatha-sravanabhidhanaih tatha
tatha pasyati vastu suksmam caksur yathaivanjana-samprayuktam*

"As the spirit soul is cleansed of all sin by hearing about My holy pastimes, he is able to clearly see the most subtle truths, just as an eye which has been treated with collyrium can see physical objects more clearly." (*Srimad Bhagavatam*

11.14.26)

There are hundreds of such statements in the devotional scriptures showing that the only true process of self-purification takes place through the performance of devotional service.

The mind's presiding and worshipable deity is Lord Vasudeva. Since the principal function of the mind is to search (*anvesanatmika*), and since the self is the object of all research (*sa atma anvestavyah*), the mind remains pure as long as it searches out the Supreme Self, Vasudeva. On the other hand, if the mind, led by desire to search for other fruits, fluctuates from Vasudeva to any other object of attention, it is considered to be contaminated. In other words, the mind cannot be considered pure if it chases after liberation, sense gratification, mystic perfection or material gain.

The mind is quickly purified by the influence of pure bhakti. If one engages in the culture of Krishna consciousness, voiding oneself of all other objectives but devotion itself, not mixing it with other superfluous disciplines like *jnana* and *karma*, then one experiences such purification.

Out of His mercy for the extremely foolish conditioned souls, the Lord instructed Arjuna and Uddhava in the Bhagavata religion. His words and teachings are to be always remembered by everyone:

man-mana bhava mad-bhaktah —"Always think of Me and become My devotee." (*Gita* 18.65)

mam ekam saranam vraja —"Take shelter of Me alone." (*Gita* 18.66)

mayy eva mana adhatsva —"Fix your mind exclusively on Me." (*Gita* 12.8)

mayi buddhim nivesaya —"Use your intelligence to understand Me." (*Gita* 12.8)

bhaktya mam abhijanati —"One can know Me as *I* am through devotion." (*Gita* 18.55)

bhaktayaham ekaya grahyah —"I can be attained only through devotion." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.14.21)

One should recognize the spiritual master as one's only true friend and well-

wisher; the most worshipable manifestation of the Lord in one's life. In order to learn the *Bhagavata-dharma*, the process by which Lord Hari can be pleased, one should surrender to the spiritual master, asking submissively from him about one's duty, and serve him.

The following are some of the teachings one should hear from the spiritual master: characteristics of devotion (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.11.34-41); principal practices of devotion (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.19.2024); and the nature of one who qualifies for the practice of devotion (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 11.20.27-34). All these teachings were delineated by the Lord to Uddhava.

Narottama dasa prays for the devotees' mercy to cross over the ocean of the illusory energy.

M rupe paiba seva mui duracara sri-guru-vaisnave rati na haila amara asesa mayate mana magana haila vaisnavete lesa-matra rati najanmila visaye bhuliya andha hainu diva-nisi gale phansa dite phire maya se pisaci may are kariyajaya charano najaya sadhu krpa vina ara nahika upaya adosa-darasi prabho patita uddhara ei bora narottame karaha nistara

"How can a wicked soul like myself attain service to the Lord? I have no affection for the service of the spiritual master and the Vaishnavas. My mind remains merged in an unlimited world of illusion and has not developed even a drop of attachment for the association of the Vaishnavas. I have forgotten myself in sense gratification and have become blind; in the meantime, that witch Maya follows me around, looking for a chance to place a noose around my neck. There seems to be no way I can be freed of her. Other than the mercy of the saintly, there is nothing to help me conquer maya. O Lord, you see no fault in anyone, you deliver even the most fallen. Please, O Lord, it is now time to save Narottama dasa."

While living in Puri, Mahaprabhu set an example by going to Gadadhara Pundit to hear the stories of Dhruva and Prahlada from the *Bhagavatam*. Following Mahaprabhu's example we must hear the stories of the ideal devotees from the mouths of the saintly and the spiritual masters.

bhakta-pada-dhuli bhakta-pada-jala bhakta-bhukta-sesa tina sadhanera bala ei tina sadhana haite krsna prema haya punah punah sarva-sastre phukariya kaya

"Three things give strength to one's spiritual practices: the dust of the devotees'

lotus feet, the water which has washed their feet, and the remnants of their food. All the scriptures loudly proclaim that love for Krishna comes from these three things." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.16.60-61)

If one follows these instructions of the great authorities and engages one's senses in the service of the spiritual master and the Vaishnavas, the external-looking, superficial vision of the world disappears and an inward-looking, introspective vision of things arises.

Sri Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Bhaktivinoda Thakura, and other great authorities set the example of writing, "Teachings to the Mind" (*Manah-siksa*). These works should be regularly studied and followed. Through them, control of the mind will be possible and one will then make rapid spiritual advancement. Other spiritual practices—*karma*, *jnana*, or *yoga*—are dependent on *bhakti*. Independently they cannot bestow any fruits on the practitioner. *Bhakti* on the other hand, is fully independent. Through the devotional path, all the partial and inadequate results of *karma*, *jnana*, and *yoga* are incidentally achieved. But the devotee treats everything other than pure devotional service of the Lord as worthless. Even if the Lord gives to the devotee sense gratification, liberation, or yogic powers he refuses them, thinking them obstacles to his devotional service. All the goals of human life, whether religiosity, material success or sense enjoyments, and even liberation itself, fold their hands and pray for service to the Lord's devotee.

Mahaprabhu unequivocally states that of all the devotional activities, the chanting of the Holy Names is topmost. In His *Siksastaha*, the Lord describes seven different auspicious results of chanting the Names. One of the secondary consequences of chanting the Holy Names is the cleansing of the mind and of the heart—*ceto-darpana-marjanam*. The reflected manifestation of the Holy Name's mercy brings about control of the mind. Through hearing and discussing the names, form, qualities, and activities of the Lord with a service attitude to the devotees, the mercy of the Holy Name manifests like a rising sun, destroying the darkness of ignorance. As the mode of ignorance recedes, control of the mind is easily attained. The mind cannot be completely controlled through any path of spiritual advancement other than *bhakti*.

CHAPTER 13 PRACTICE AND PREACHING

*namo maha-vadanyaya krsna-prema-pradaya te krsnaya krsna-caitanya-namne
gaura-tvise namah*

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto Lord Sri Krishna who comes with a golden effulgence and carries the name of Krishna Chaitanya. In this form, He is more magnanimous than any other avatar, even Krishna Himself, because He freely distributes what no one has ever given before — pure love of Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.19.53)

With this verse Srila Rupa Gosvami summarizes the mood of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, paying homage to Lord Chaitanya's identity, name, form, qualities, and pastimes. Rupa identifies Mahaprabhu as Krishna Himself in the most perfect form as the lover of the Vraja *gopis*, and explains that Mahaprabhu is known by the name Krishna Chaitanya. Similarly, Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami wrote:

*sesa-lilaya dhare nama sri-krsna-caitanya sri-krsnajanaye saba visva kaila
dhanya*

"In the latter part of His life He was known as Sri Krishna Chaitanya. The purport of His name is that He blesses the whole world by giving it consciousness(caitanya) of Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.3.34)

Mahaprabhu's form is described by the words *gaura-tvise*, "to Him whose body is of a golden hue."

Svarupa Damodara describes the Lord as *radha-bhava-dyuti-suvalita*—possessing the color of molten gold like that of Srimati Radharani. Mahaprabhu's principal qualities of compassion and munificence are revealed with the words *maha-vadanyaya*, and His pastime of distributing love of God, the *prema* which is not possessed even by gods like Brahma and Shiva, is described by the words *krsna-prema-pradaya*.

The Purpose Of Mahaprabhu's Incarnation

After completing His magnanimous pastimes full of sweetness, the Supreme Person, Vrajendranandana Sri Krishna, left the earth along with His eternal associates the cows, cowherders, and cowherd girls. On returning to His eternal abode, Goloka, He began to think as follows: "All this time I have not bestowed pure love of Myself on the world. By studiously reading the scriptures, the *jiva* souls may come to understand their true identity and engage in My service by following the *vidhi-marga*. But by following only this method of devotional service, no one can ever reach the supreme level of devotion as found in the residents of Vraja. On the *vidhi* path, the devotee is constantly aware of My majesty and thus his love does not reach the pinnacles of intensity that are common in Vraja. Devotion diluted by consciousness of My divine majesty is not so pleasing to Me.

sakala jagate more kare vidhi-bhakti vidhi-bhaktye vraja-bhava paite nahi sakti aisvarya-jnanete saba jagat misrita aisvarya-sithila-preme nahi mora prita aisvarya-jnane vidhi-bhajana kariya vaikunthake jaya catur-vidha mukti pana

"Everyone throughout the world worships Me according to scriptural injunctions; but by this process of *vidhi bhakti* one cannot attain the loving moods of Vraja. The whole world looks upon Me with awe and veneration, but devotion diluted by such consciousness of My majesty is not preferred by Me. One who worships according to the scriptural injunctions in a mood of awe and veneration attains the four kinds of liberation and goes to Vaikuntha. (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 1.3.15-7*)

"A devotee who follows the *vidhi* path will no doubt attain one of the four kinds of liberation in Vaikuntha, *sarsti* (possessing riches identical to Mine), *samipya* (residing close to Me), *salokya* (residing on the same planet as I) or *sarupya* (having a form like Mine). But even Vaishnavas on the *vidhi-marga* have no desire for *sayujya mukti*, for it means merging into My impersonal aspect and losing their identity as My servants.

sayujya sunite bhaktera hay ghrna lajja bhaya naraka vanchaya tabu sayujya na laya

"When a devotee hears of *sayujya mukti*, he feels disgust, shame, and fear. He would rather go to hell than merge into the formless Brahman. (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.6.268*)

"My exclusive devotees desire nothing but the joy of serving Me and do not think anything else can bring happiness. It is My desire to preach throughout the world a path of pure love which transcends the *vidhi-marga*. I will preach the fundamental religious activity of the Kali Yuga, the chanting of My Holy Names, and by mixing the Name with the different relational moods of servitorship, friendship, protectiveness, and erotic love, I will make the world dance in ecstasy. I too will take on the mood of a devotee and, by experiencing this loving ecstasy Myself, will teach the path of pure love to the world. One who does not put a particular religious teaching into practice cannot expect to preach it effectively.

yuga-dharma pravartamu nama-sankirtana cari bhava-bhakti diya nacamu bhuvana apani karimu bhakta-bhava angikare apani acari bhakti sikhaimu sabare apane na kaile dharma sifchana na yaya ei ta siddhanta gita-bhagavate gaya

"I shall personally inaugurate the religion of the age, *nama-sankirtana*, the congregational chanting of the Holy Name. By giving ecstatic love of God to the world, I will make it dance. I shall take the part of a devotee, and I shall teach devotional service to all by practicing it Myself. No one can teach religious activities to others without putting them into practice himself. The Gita and

Bhagavatam both confirm this truth. (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.3.19-21)

yuga-dharma-pravartana haya amsa haite ama vina anye nare vraja-prema dite

"I establish the religious principles for each age through My plenary portions. I alone, however, can bestow the kind of loving service found in Vraja. (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.3.26)

"The preaching of the religious principles of an age can be propagated by any of My unlimited expansions, partial or plenary portions. However, the supreme gift of *vrajaprema* cannot be given by anyone other than Me, Vrajendranandana. Consequently, I will descend to the surface of the earth with My closest associates and, engaging in various delightful pastimes with them, I will distribute the chanting of the Holy Names and *vrajaprema*. " (*Anubhasya* 1.3.13-28)

After so deciding, the complete, potent Lord took on the golden color and the

spirit of His beloved Radha, His complete potency, and appeared in Nabadwip-Mayapura as the son of Jagannatha Misra and Saci Devi. This event took place at the dawn of Kali Yuga.

The dawn or first part of the age of Kali (*kali-kale prathama sandhyaya*) is explained by our worshipable Srila Prabhupada in his *Anubhasya* as follows: "The word *sandhya* refers to the sixth part of the age at its beginning and end. The *prathama-sandhya* is thus the beginning of the age and is one-twelfth of its entire period. The *sesa-sandhya* is the same length of time at the end of the age. Since the Kali Yuga lasts 432,000 solar years, its *prathama-sandhya* continues for 36,000 years. Lord Chaitanya appeared in Nabadwip Mayapura after 4,586 solar years of Kali Yuga had passed."

In the first part of His life, Mahaprabhu went by the name Visvambhara, "He who maintains the world." He lived up to this name by distributing love of God. Similarly, in the latter part of His life He was known as Krishna Chaitanya, "Krishna consciousness." By making the people of the world conscious of Krishna He brought good fortune to all.

prathama lilaya tarira visvambhara nama bhakti-rase bharila dharila bhuta-grama dubhrn dhatura artha posana dharana pusila dharila prema diya tri-bhuvana sesa-lilaya dhare nama sri-krsna-caitanya sri-krsna janaye saba visva kaila dhanya

"In His early pastimes, Lord Chaitanya was known by the name Visvambhara because He inundated (*bhara*) the world (*visva*) with the nectar of devotion and thus saved all living beings. The verb root *dubhrn* [which is the root of the word *bhara*] indicates nourishing and maintaining. So this name indicates that Mahaprabhu nourishes and maintains the three worlds by distributing love of God. In His later pastimes, He was known as Sri Krishna Chaitanya. He blessed the whole world by teaching about Lord Sri Krishna." (*Chaitanya Chari-tamrta* 1.3.32-34)

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu accepted the mood of a devotee in order to preach the great treasure of elevated and effulgent love for Krishna through His own acts of relishing it. This great example is indeed the standard we should follow.

Mahaprabhu, The Gardener In The Orchard Of Love

Krishna's Vraja pastime is one of munificence (*audarya*) in which sweetness

(*madhurya*) predominates, while His Nabadwip pastime as Gaura is one of sweetness in which munificence predominates. In this spirit of munificence, the compassionate Lord Gauranga played the role of a gardener who planted an orchard of love-fruit trees in Nabadwip. Mahaprabhu is sometimes said to be the tree of ecstatic love for Krishna, but by a divine twist, He is also the one who enjoys the fruits of this tree and distributes them. While the Lord relished the taste of these fruits, He also gave them away with such enthusiasm that He used both hands. As He did so, He said,

*ekala malakara ami kahan kahan jaba ekala va kata phala pariya bilaba ekala
uthana dite haya parisrama keha pay a keha na paya rahe mane bhrama ataeva
ami ajna dilun sabakare jahan tahan prema-phala deha jare tare*

"As I am the only gardener, to how many different places can I go? And since I am all alone, how many fruits can I pick and give away? It is extremely tiring to gather up the fruits and distribute them alone; it disturbs Me to know that some people will receive My fruit and others will not. Therefore I order everyone to distribute these fruits of love to everyone they see, wherever they go."

(*Chaitanya Charitamrta 1.9.34-6*)

In this way, Mahaprabhu asked those who received His mercy to help Him. In this way they can render service to Him.

*atma-icchamrte vrksa sinci nirantara tahate asankhya phala vrksera
upara ataeva saba phala deha jare tare khaiya hauk loka ajara amare*

"I constantly water the tree with the nectar of My personal desire. As a result, there are countless fruits of love upon it. Therefore, I ask all of you to distribute these fruits to everyone everywhere so that by eating them, all can become free from old age and death." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 1.9.38-9*)

Mahaprabhu further specifies that it is the special duty of those who are born in India to take up this service:

*bharata-bhumite haila manusya janma jara janma sarthaka kari kara para-
upakara*

"Whoever has taken a human birth in the land of Bharata should make his life successful and engage in welfare work for others." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 1.9.41*)

Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu thus so compassionately distributed the fruits of love of God in this effort to make the world fortunate. But we are so wretched that we are indifferent to this matchless gift and refuse to accept it—what to speak of participating in the service of preaching.

Mahaprabhu's Instructions To Kurma And Vasudeva

When Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu went on pilgrimage to southern India, He distributed Krishna's name and Krishna *prema* to the inhabitants, making them into Vaishnavas. One of the first holy places He visited in South India was the abode of Kurma, a deity form of the Lord's turtle incarnation.

In that town lived a Vedic brahmin named Kurma Vipra. When Kurma saw Mahaprabhu, he was very impressed by His spiritual effulgence and invited Him to his house for meals. He and his entire family served Mahaprabhu devotedly, charming the Lord with their humility and faith. Kurma became so enchanted with the Lord that when it was time for Him to leave, he felt unable to bear His separation. He fell down at the Lord's feet and begged to be allowed to accompany Him wherever He went. The Lord was extremely pleased with Kurma's attitude, but nevertheless answered him with the following words:

*prabhu kahe aiche bata kabhu na kahiba grhe rahi krsna-nama nirantara
laiba jare dekha tare kaha krsna upadesa amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei
desa kabhu na badhibe tomaya visaya taranga punar api ei thai pabe mora
sanga*

"Never make such a suggestion again. You should rather remain at home and constantly chant the holy name of Krishna. Instruct whomever you see in the religion of Krishna. Become a spiritual master on My order and deliver everyone in this land. Do this and you will never again be entangled in the waves of materialistic life. Indeed, one day you will have My company again, here in this very place." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta*, 2.7.127-9)

This was the way that the Lord spread Krishna consciousness on His travels from Puri to Setubandha at the southern tip of the subcontinent, purifying the way with the touch of His lotus feet. He would mercifully stop at the houses of brahmins like Kurma and shower them with grace by instructing them to chant the Holy Names and to instruct others in the chanting.

On that night, the Lord stayed in Kurma's home and the next morning, after

bathing, prepared to continue on His way. Kurma Vipra followed Him part of the way until the Lord told him to go back home. In the meantime, a leper named Vasudeva was also on his way to Kurma's house. He had heard that Mahaprabhu was there and was hoping to get a glance of the Lord. When Vasudeva learned from Kurma that the Lord had already departed, he was so disappointed that he fell down on the ground and fainted, lamenting his misfortune.

The Lord, as the omniscient indweller of all beings, was fully aware of Vasudeva's distress. Even though He had already walked a great distance from Kurma's house, He returned to grant the leper the opportunity to see him. Not only did He allow Vasudeva to see Him, but even embraced him affectionately. Mahaprabhu is the friend of the distressed and His miraculous touch immediately cured Vasudeva of his leprosy and turned him into a healthy and handsome young man.

Vasudeva Vipra was amazed to see the limitless mercy of the Supreme Lord and with tears in his eyes he glorified the Lord with a verse spoken by Sudama Vipra from the Bhagavatam:

*kvaham daridrah papiyan kva krsnah sri-niketanah brahma-bandhur iti
smaham bahubhyam parirambhitah*

"Just see the difference between a miserable sinner like myself and the abode of the Goddess of Fortune, Sri Krishna! Although I am a most unqualified brahmin, He has mercifully embraced me in His arms." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 10.89.16)

When Vasudeva had become a beautiful young man as a result of Mahaprabhu's miraculous touch, he realized that Sri Chaitanya was none other than the ocean of all virtue and master of the most fallen, the Supreme Person Hari Himself. He said, "Even the lowest classes of society were disgusted at seeing the open sores of my leprous body. They would run away whenever they saw me coming. The only person who could possibly be so merciful as to touch me is the supremely independent Lord, whose only distress is to see the distress of others. O most merciful Lord! I think, however, that I was better off as an untouchable leper. Now that you have made me handsome, I will no doubt become intoxicated with vanity and unable to remember your lotus feet."

Mahaprabhu considered Vasudeva Vipra to be most qualified due to his humility, and with a choking voice, ecstatically instructed him to act as an

acarya, just as He had ordered Kurma:

*prabhu kahe kabhu tomaya na habe abhimana nirantara kaha tumi krsna krsna
nama krsna upadesi kara jivera nistara acirate krsna toma karibena para*

"You will never become vain if you constantly chant Krishna's name. Deliver the fallen souls by instructing them about Krishna, and Krishna will very quickly deliver you from the material world." (*Chaitanya Chari-tamrta* 2.7.147-8)

After giving these assurances to Vasudeva, the supremely merciful Mahaprabhu left the pilgrimage town of Kurmaksetra. Kurma Vipra and Vasudeva embraced each other and sang Mahaprabhu's glories, their eyes filled with tears of sadness at His departure. Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami has described this story as "the deliverance of Vasudeva," and named Mahaprabhu, *Vasudevamrtapada*, "the giver of ambrosia to Vasudeva."

Preaching Does Not Require Renouncing Home

Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura has commented on Mahaprabhu's instructions to Kurma Vipra with the following words: "For those who are determined to abandon everything to take shelter of Him and serve Him exclusively, the Supreme Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu here gives the instruction to remain in the home, i.e., to give up the pride of being a heroic performer of *bhajana* and to adopt a regular practice of chanting the holy name of Krishna and, with the humility characteristic of those who remain in the householder station, instruct others in chanting the Holy Names. If one takes up the duties of a spiritual master in this way, he will never become entangled in the 'waves of materialistic life' in the form of the desire for selfaggrandizement.

"Many foolish people think that preaching through the writing of books as done by Rupa Gosvami, San-atana Gosvami, Jiva Gosvami or Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, or taking on large numbers of disciples like Madhvacarya, Ramanuj acarya or Narottama dasa Thakura, is an impediment to spiritual practice. Indeed, these less intelligent persons even claim that such activities are materially entangling. By adhering to such erroneous ideas, they become offenders to the many unalloyed devotees who have nothing to do with the material world and yet preach. This teaching of the Lord to Kurma and Vasudeva is intended for such people. If they analyze these teachings carefully, they will give up their pride in a false show of humility and advance the cause of

genuine *bhajana* by instructing rather than showing disdain for those who are without devotion to the Lord." (Anubhasya2.7.130)

Srila Prabhupada continues: "Sri Krishna Chaitanya bestowed consciousness on the unconscious living beings. After He had done so, He instructed those who had been brought to consciousness and attracted to the service of the Lord to take on the role of teachers or *acaryas* and do for others what He had done for them. Through this pastime of preaching the scriptural path and bringing more souls into the fold of the Lord's infallible family, Gaurasundara fully revealed the glories of His incarnation." (Anubhasya2.7.152)

Some people have difficulty understanding the meaning of the instruction of the Lord to take up the practice of chanting the Holy Names and to simultaneously preach it. If such persons go on to dress up as gurus, they take on demoniac qualities like pride, egotism, and arrogance, and walk through the gates of hell. For this reason, a devotee should take the vow of engaging in personal devotional practice headed by chanting and preaching activities in the spirit of humble service to the servants of the Lord. By so doing, one will be free from any worries about the influence of demoniac qualities. Mahaprabhu Himself taught that the real identity of the individual is not related to the bodily concept of life; "I am the servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord of the gopis." One who keeps this consciousness alive while seeking his own welfare and that of others is free from any fear of falldown. Otherwise, one may well succumb to the temptation of pride.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura has sung about the danger of pride for someone who is otherwise engaged in preaching activity:

*ami ta vaisnava ei buddhi haile amani na haba ami pratisthasa asi hrdaya
dusibe haibo niraya-gami*

*nije srestha mani ucchistadi-dane abhimana habe bhara tai sisya tava thakiba
sarvada na laiba puja kara*

"If I think that I have become a Vaishnava then I will never be prideless. The desire for prestige will descend on my heart and contaminate it and I will go to hell. Thinking myself to be superior to others, I will leave them the remnants of my food and this will fill me with arrogance. Therefore, O Vaishnava Thakura, I promise to always remain your disciple and to never accept worship from

anyone." (*Kalyana-kalpa-taru*)

If we disregard this instruction of the great authority Bhaktivinoda Thakura, then we will be affected by our offensive behavior. One may easily deceive innocent people by mouthing the teachings of devotional service while internally thinking "I am a spiritual master" or "I am a Vaishnava," but no one can fool the Lord who dwells within the heart and knows every thought. How can we expect to deceive Him? By ignoring Him, we commit offenses that will result in our degradation to lower species of life and hellish suffering.

Sanatana's Praise Of Haridasa Thakura

Mahaprabhu's most beloved associate Sanatana Gosvami praised Haridasa Thakura, the great teacher of the Holy Name, as the ideal example of the ability to harmonize the practices of chanting the Holy Name and educating people about chanting.

sanatana kahe toma-sama keba ache ana mahaprabhura gane tumi mahabhagyavan avatara-karya prabhura nama-pracare sei nija-karya prabhu karena tomara dvare pratyaha kara tina-laksa nama-sankirtana sabara age kara namera mahima kathana apane acare keha na kare pracara pracara karena keha, na karena acara acara pracara namera karaha dui karya tumi sarva-guru tumi jagatera arya

Sanatana Gosvami asked, "Haridasa Thakura, is anyone your equal? You are the most blessed of the associates of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The purpose of the Lord's incarnation is to spread the chanting of His holy names, but He is doing this work through you. You daily chant 300,000 Holy Names and you tell everyone of the glories of chanting. Some carry out the injunctions of spiritual life but do nothing to spread these teachings, whereas others preach but do not follow the principles themselves. You, however, do both things and therefore you are the spiritual master of all, a truly religious person in this world." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.4.99-103)

In his *Anubhasya*, our most worshipable Srila Prabhupada, made the following comments on these verses: "Haridasa Thakura is the spiritual master of the entire universe and the object of veneration for everyone. As a brahmin through the process of initiation, he chanted the pure Name and is thus qualified to be an *dcarya*, or one who presents the ideal standard of practice. Furthermore, through

loudly chanting these names and their glories, he initiated all the living beings in the world in the sacrifice of the Holy Name. By so doing, he qualified as a *pracaraka* or preacher. In this way Haridasa engaged in the practice and in the dissemination of the teaching." (*Anubhasya* 3.4.103)

Acquiring The Authority To Preach

We have seen that Mahaprabhu Himself gave notice that Haridasa kept to this standard in preaching the Holy Names. The importance of authority in teaching is further explained by Krishna in His instructions to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-gita*:

yad yad acarati sresthas tat tad evetaro janah sa yat pramanam kurute lokas tad anuvartate

"The behavior of superior people is imitated by the ordinary; that which they accept as authoritative is followed by the rest of society." (*Gita* 3.21)

The words "superior people" (*srestha*) mean those who are genuine authorities, or *mahajanas* maintaining the highest standards of morality. Their path is the one we must follow, as was stated by Yudhisthira in answer to the questions of Yamaraja: *mahajano yena gatah sa pantha*—"The path of the *mahajanas* is the one everyone should follow."

Mahajanas, or great authorities, are free from the four defects: (1) *bhrama* (error), or the tendency to take the real for the unreal or the unreal for the real, such as a rope for a snake, etc.; (2) *pramada*, mistakes arising from carelessness or inattention; (3) *karanapatava*, limitations on the senses which result in erroneous perceptions; and (4) *vipralipsa*, the desire to deceive. When one has the desire to deceive, then even though he knows his knowledge is inadequate he makes a pretense of knowing, or even though in the possession of the truth, he hides it from others. Anyone free from these defects should be considered authoritative. One should learn from a person who is learned in the scriptures and who is disciplined by saintly behavioral standards; who is experienced in the practices of devotional service and is free from anger, enviousness, and hatred. One may be capable of citing hundreds of verses from scripture and make glorious and eloquent speeches, but if he has not adopted the standards of behavior set by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, his rhetoric alone will

have no effect. Preaching without practice is futile.

The *Bhagavatam* tells the story of how Maharaja Pariksit² came upon the personified form of Kali Yuga, who at the beginning of the age of Kali, was wreaking havoc on earth. Pariksit wished to banish Kali completely from the earth, but Kali prayed to be given a place of his own. Pariksit then gave him five places where he could live, and these are known as the abodes of irreligion. They are: (1) the gambling den, or anywhere betting takes place; (2) the places of intoxication—taverns, opium dens, or any place where drugs (including tobacco) are consumed; (3) anywhere illicit sex is practiced, i.e., wherever there are sexual relations outside of marriage or even excessive attachment to one's lawful wedded partner; (4) wherever violence to animals is practiced, i.e., slaughterhouses and all places where meat is consumed by humans as food; and (5) wherever large amounts of gold are accumulated. Any place where money is spent for purposes other than the service of the Lord, it is being misused and results in undesirable entanglement. Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati states that gambling destroys truthfulness; intoxication results in the destruction of austerity; illicit sex destroys inner and outer purity; and meat-eating destroys mercy. Avoidance of these sinful activities is the pillar of religiosity, and tolerance of them means the establishment of irreligion. The possession of great wealth lays the way to a sinful life. Therefore, wherever there is a large accumulation of riches, untruth, arrogance, lust, and violence are found.

athaitani na seveta bubhusuh purusah kvacit visesato dharmasilo raja lokapatir guruh

"Thus, one who desires his own well-being should refrain from engaging in the above-mentioned sinful activities. The pious, kings, leaders, and teachers should especially be careful to avoid them."(Srimad *Bha-gavatam* 1.17.41)

One who dwells in any of the five abodes of Kali will not be able to maintain the appropriate standards of conduct, or ever expect to see his preaching fructify. For this reason Mahaprabhu repeatedly warned devotees against the association of non-devotees and sensualists. The conclusion is that a non-Vaishnava, despite his learning, his intelligence, or his eloquence as a speaker, can never expect to be an effective preacher if he is a debauchee, even if he makes claims of loyalty to Mahaprabhu. Mahaprabhu's associate Jagadananda Pundit said,

gorara ami gorara ami mukhe balile na cale gorara acara gorara pracara laile

phala phale

"It is not enough to simply advertise repeatedly that one is a devotee of Mahaprabhu, saying, 'I am Gaura's, I am Gaura's.' Those who take up the practices taught by Mahaprabhu as well as His preaching mission get the results of being the Lord's follower." (*Prema-vivarta*)

Narottama dasa Thakura, in his *Prema-bhakti-candrika*, also criticizes the association of non-devotees. Na-rottama dasa's prayers and hymns are collected in *Prarthana* and *Prema-bhakti-candrika*, while those of Bhaktivinoda Thakura's are found in *Saranagati*, *Kalyana-kalpa-taru*, *Gitavali* and *Gita-mala*. The songs of these *acaryas* contain the essence of all the devotional scriptures. One should study these books after taking shelter of a genuine spiritual master and accepting the principles of Vaishnava behavior from him. As one goes on to become a genuine, pure devotee, he may greatly benefit the conditioned souls by preaching the message extracted from these texts.

Taking Shelter Of The Lord: The Life Of The Devotee

The first song in Bhaktivinoda Thakura's *Saranagati* is as follows:

*Sri krsna caitanya prabhu jive daya kari sva-parsada sviya dhama saha
avatari atyantā durlabha prema karibare dana sikhaya saranagati bhakatera
prana dainya, atma-nivedana, goptrve varana avasya raksibe krsna visvasa
palana bhakti-anukula matra karyera svikara bhakti-pratikula-bhava
varjanangikara sad-anga saranagati haibe janhara tanhara prarthana sune sri-
nanda-kumara*

*rupa sanatana pade dante trna kari bhaktivinoda pare dui pada dhari kandiya
kandiya bale ami ta adhama sikhaye saranagati karahe uttama*

"Out of compassion for the fallen *jivas*, Sri Krishna Chaitanya appeared in this world with all of His eternal associates and His eternal abode. Wishing to bestow on them the most rare love for Himself, He taught the process of taking shelter of the Lord which is so important for the devotees. Humility, self-surrender, accepting Krishna as your protector, belief that Krishna will save you in all circumstances, undertaking only activities conducive to development of love for Krishna, and rejecting everything that is detrimental to it; these are the six elements of taking shelter. The son of Nanda, Krishna, listens to the prayers of anyone who takes shelter of Him in this way. I fall down and take hold of the

feet of Rupa and Sanatana in all humility. Crying, 'I am most fallen.' I beg, 'Please teach me how to take shelter of Krishna so that I can perfect my human life.' "

Without taking shelter in this way, one cannot perfect his human life and become free of the darkness of material conditioning. But if doing so, we will be able to properly preach about Krishna's name, form, qualities, and pastimes.

As Srila Prabhupada wrote, *prana ache tanra se-hetu pracara*—"One who has life, preaches." (*Vaisnava ke?*) Therefore, even before preaching, the devotee's first duty is to take up this process of surrender, which is the life of the devotee. Only then will he receive Krishna's blessings and be worthy of preaching the message which was given by Mahaprabhu Himself. Otherwise, he will be nothing more than a cadaver, and his preaching will benefit neither oneself nor others. We may be able to profit and gain fame from mundane people in this world, but that will hold no value on the transcendental platform. Srila Prabhupada further wrote in his poem *Vaisnava ke?*

sri dayita-dasa kirtanete asa kara uccaihsvare hari-nama-rava

"Your only hope is in the performance of *harinama-sankirtana*, so chant the Holy Names as loudly as you can."

It is clear that Srila Prabhupada, with these words, is asking us to chant the Holy Names loudly. If we chant without life, would that not be a source of disappointment to him?

Many offenses may be committed by aspirants to spiritual perfection. Thinking of the guru as an ordinary mortal is the gravest offense. One who thinks this way can never successfully preach the Lord's message. Can anyone who makes a pretense of preaching without putting the message into practice be truly pleasing to Mahaprabhu, who Himself stated, "I Myself put the religious principles into practice and then preach them"?

We pray to the spiritual master that he give us the strength and intelligence to become truly fixed in the practice of devotional service and then distribute Mahaprabhu's message everywhere. May He give us the nectar of *prema* to drink. Once intoxicated with this *prema*, we will be truly able to sing His glories.

As far as devotees on the *raganuga* path are concerned, they may aspire to serve

Krishna in a relationship of servitude, friendship, protectiveness or conjugal love, but their aspiration must not be counterfeit. It must follow the directions of the spiritual master and only then will it result in the great fortune of service to the Lord. Rather than simply making a pretense of possessing transcendental greed, an initiated devotee should consider chanting without offenses as the principal internal, or confidential devotional practice. Then, by the grace of his guru, this transcendental greed awakens. This is the principal activity of the devout *bhakta* and this is the teaching that one should try to spread. From such practice and such preaching, one's own ultimate good will be achieved as well as the ultimate good of everyone in the world. This is absolutely certain.

CHAPTER 14 THE PATH OF PASSIONATE LOVE

It is clear from the previous chapter that the purpose of Mahaprabhu's appearance on this Earth was to distribute the love of the residents of Vrindavan, especially the mood of the *gopis*, to the entire world. And He preached this love through close associates such as Ramananda Raya.

gaurangera madhura-lila jarira kame pravesila hrdaya nirmala bhela tara

"Purified is the heart of one who has heard the delightful pastimes of Lord Gaurariga."

Lord Gaurariga's name, form, qualities, and activities are all delightful and sweet.

*madhuram madhuram vapur asya vibhor madhuram madhuram vadanam
madhuram madhu-gandhi mrdu-smitam etad aho madhuram madhuram
madhuram madhuram*

"What a delight is this transcendental body of the majestic Lord, what a delight! What a delight is His beautiful face! What a delight! What a delight! His gentle smile is as sweet as honey, how sweet, how sweet, how sweet!" (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.21.136)

All of Mahaprabhu's pastimes are transcendently delightful. His pastime of meeting the world's foremost scholar and logician, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, is an example of such transcendental delight. For an entire week the Lord heard in silence the explanations of Vedanta given by Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, and in the end enlightened Sarvabhauma by giving the correct interpretation of the Vedanta as well as 18 different explanations of the *atmarama* verse of the *Bhagavata*. At first Sarvabhauma was deflated and disappointed in himself after witnessing the Lord's unparalleled scholarship, but taking shelter of the Lord's lotus feet, he glorified the Lord, who compassionately granted him a vision of His six-armed form.

Delightful, too, was Mahaprabhu's reciprocation with King Prataparudra,

culminating in His hearing the *Gopi-gita* verses from the King, embracing him and glorifying him as *bhurida*—"most charitable"—and then granting him too a vision of His six-armed form.

tava kathamrtam tapta-jivanam kavibhir iditam kalmasapaham sravana-mangalam srimad-atatam bhuvigrnanti ye bhurida janah

"My Lord, the nectar of Your words and the descriptions of Your activities are like nectar for those who are parched in this dry material world. Transmitted by exalted personalities, these narrations eradicate all sinful reactions. Whoever hears them attains all good fortune. Those in this world who broadcast these delightful topics are certainly the most munificent altruists." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 10.31.9, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.14.14)

Mahaprabhu's pastime of teaching the theology of *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana* to Rupa Gosvami at Prayaga and to Sanatana Gosvami at the Dasasvamedha Ghat in Benares is another source of nectar. But perhaps the most delightful of all His pastimes is that of His hearing from Ramananda Raya about the ultimate goal of spiritual life and the process for attaining it.

Mahaprabhu's Conversation With Ramananda

In His first meeting with Ramananda Raya, Mahaprabhu feigned ignorance and asked Ramananda about various spiritual practices and their goals. In answer, Ramananda Raya gradually explained the different levels of philosophical understanding until he finally came to the highest understanding of spiritual life, the ecstatic loving interchanges between Radha and Krishna.

The spiritual methods Mahaprabhu progressively heard from Ramananda Raya were: (1) practice of one's prescribed duty according to the *varnasrama-dharma*; (2) giving up the results of one's activities by offering them to the Lord, or devotional service mixed with other disinterested activity; (3) renunciation of one's *varnasrama* duties, or *karma-sannyasa*; and (4) devotional service mixed with the search for knowledge (*jnana-misra bhakti*). As Ramananda proposed each of these practices and their results, Mahaprabhu rejected them, saying, "This is superficial. Go more deeply and reveal something more substantial." Ramananda proceeded to describe *jnana-sunya bhakti*, i.e., devotional service with no desire for liberation. At this Mahaprabhu expressed approval but asked Ramananda to go still deeper.

As Mahaprabhu played the role of a curious seeker, Ramananda, out of a desire to serve and answer the Lord, played the role of a teacher. He then described devotional service in the mood of passiveness as the goal of spiritual life. Mahaprabhu approved, but nonetheless, he again asked Ramananda to go deeper. Ramananda then described devotion in the spirit of service, then in the moods of friendship and protectiveness, whereupon Mahaprabhu grew more and more enthusiastic saying, "This is excellent, but please go deeper." Finally, Ramananda spoke of the love of Krishna's mistresses as the supreme goal of spiritual life, at which the Lord approved ecstatically. He said, "Yes! This is the limit of spiritual achievement, there can be no doubt. But, if there is anything more than this, please tell Me."

Ramananda Raya then began to describe the love of Radha for Krishna *as* the crowning experience of divine love. The Lord's joy then increased beyond bounds and He kept asking Ramananda to go on speaking. Ramananda now began to describe the modalities of Radha and Krishna's loving exchanges, quoting verses from the *Gita-govinda* and other texts which describe the unequalled character of Radha's most competent love for the Lord. At this, Mahaprabhu said to Ramananda in great satisfaction:

ebe se janilun sadhya-sadhana-nirnaya age ara ache kichu sunite mana haya

"Now I have what I came to learn from you; the goal of life and the process of achieving it. Nevertheless, I think that there is still something more and I desire greatly to hear it." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.8.118)

Prema-vilasa-vivarta

As Mahaprabhu specifically asked to hear more about Radha and Krishna, and Their relations and pastimes, Ramananda continued to recount all he knew on the subject. Still Mahaprabhu continued to plead with him to go on, further and further. Finally, Ramananda gave a description of a most delightful state of ecstatic love called *prema-vilasa-vivarta*. In this particular transformation of the loving mood, he explained, Radha is overcome by her most elevated ecstatic feelings and, even though separated from Krishna, thinks He is in fact present.

Radha and Krishna's divine love affairs are conducted in two modes: that of separation and that of union. Separation, or *vipralambha*, is a particular transformation of Radha and Krishna's pastimes which serves to increase the

pleasure of union. In the *prema-vilasa-vivarta*, however, due to the intensity of Her *adhirudha-maha-bhava*, Radha experiences hallucinations of union even in the state of separation. The ecstatic beauty of Radha in this condition is indescribable.

For Mahaprabhu's pleasure, Ramananda Raya sang a song of his own composition describing this situation. Mahaprabhu was so overcome by emotion on hearing Ramananda's song that He covered Ramananda's mouth with His hand. The song portrayed Radharani's words when in this exalted mood of love:

pahilehi raga nayana-bhange bhela anudina badhala, avadhi na gela na so ramana, na hama ramani dunhu-mana manobhavapesala jani' e sakhi, se-saba prema-kahini kanu-thame kahabi vichurala jani' na khonjalun duti, na khonjalun an dunhukeri milane madhya ta panca-bana ab sohi viraga, tunhu bheli duti supurukha-premaki aichana riti

"O *sakhi!* In the very beginning, Our eyes met and Our love took birth. Day by day it grew, never finding a limit. He is not My husband and I am not His wife; it is as though Cupid himself ground our minds into powder and mixed them together. O *sakhi*, now that We are separated, if Krishna has forgotten all these things, then remind Him of this: When We first met, We didn't have to seek out a go-between or anyone else. The only one who brought Us together was Cupid with his five arrows, no one else. Now that We are apart, that love has gone and He has had to engage you as a messenger. That is the way of love with good-looking men like Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.8.194, See also *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2 13.46)

Our most worshipable predecessor *acarya* Srila Thakura Bhaktivinoda paraphrases this song as follows: "Prior to our first meeting, during the period known as *purva-raga* or incipient affection, through the mutual exchange of glances, something called *raga* or love suddenly came into existence. This *raga* was born of both our natures and it kept on growing and growing without reaching any limit. Krishna is the lover or *ramana*, but in this case He was not the cause of the *raga*; neither was I, the beloved or *ramani*, its cause. The love that arose when We first looked at each other was created by Cupid, who is known as Manobhava, or 'mind-born.' He appeared and ground our minds into a powder. If you think, O *sakhi*, that Krishna has forgotten all this love now that We are separated from each other, then tell Him the following: Previously, We sought out no messenger at the time of union — We asked no one to intercede.

The only mediator We had was Cupid himself with his five arrows. Now that We are separated, the raga has become *viraga*. *Viraga* means *visista-raga*, or 'a special kind of love,' or *viccheda-gata raga*, 'love in separation.' In this case it has become *adhirudha maha-bhava*, or the most elevated stage of divine love. Now you are acting as the *dull*, or messenger. You will see that handsome men always behave in this way."

Srila Thakura Bhaktivinoda continues: "The purport of this song is as follows: during the time of union, love (raga) takes the form of desire and itself takes the role as the messenger. At the time of separation, love becomes a *duti* in the form of *adhirudha-mahabhava*. This highest platform of divine love is the messenger of *prema-vilasa-vivarta*, in which there is an experience of union even during separation. Thus Radharani addresses this love as a messenger. This indicates that loving affairs are as relishable during separation as they are during enjoyment. *Prema-vilasa-vivarta* is like a hallucination, similar to one's taking a piece of rope to be a snake, such as when Radha takes a *tamala* tree to be Krishna. In this state of confusion born of the *adhirudha maha-bhava*, She experiences a type of union." (*Amrta-pravaha-bhasya* to *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.8.193)

In his *Anubhasya*, our most worshipable Gurudeva, Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, gives further comments about Ramananda's song: "With the words *na so ramana na ham ramani* ('He is not My lover and I am not His beloved.') Mahaprabhu has revealed the *acintya-bhedabheda-tattva*. It is on this basis that Jiva Gosvami gave this name to his philosophical doctrine in the *Sarva-samvadini*. In this song, there is subjective confusion between the identities of the lovers. Ordinary conditioned souls should be warned not to adopt the process of worship known as *ahamgrahopasana*, identifying themselves with one of the eternal associates of the Lord or the Lord Himself. The philosophy of *ahamgrahopasana* is a product of the foolishness of those who believe that all is only one spiritual energy. It is the inverse of the spiritual pastimes of the Divine Couple. Mahaprabhu descended from that part of Goloka where His eternal pastimes are going on in order to demonstrate the error of those who think that nondual supreme truth does not experience the subjective (*asraya*) aspect of divine love." (*Anubhasya* to *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.8.19)

The Sadhana For Achieving The Highest Goal

Mahaprabhu accepted that there was no higher achievement than *prema-vilasa-*

vivarta in spiritual life, and He then asked Ramananda what was the *sadhana*, or process for achieving it. Ramananda began his answer by first denying he was the true speaker.

mora mukhe vakta tumi tumi hao srota atyanta rahasya suna sadhanera katha

"You are speaking through me and at the same time You are listening. Now hear the extremely confidential explanation of how this goal can be attained."

(Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.8.200)

Ramananda then explained how Radha and Krishna's transcendental pastimes are dependent on Radha's girlfriends for their development. Only these *sakhis* have the right of entry into Radha-Krishna's confidential pastimes, and they are the ones who expand these *lilas*. Without them, the *lilas* would be limited. The *sakhis* not only participate in these pastimes, but they also are the first to relish them. Without their leadership, no one can enter these confidential pastimes. Thus they must be accepted before the acceptance of Radha and Krishna.

sakhi vina ei lilaya anyera nahi gati sakhi-bhave je tanre kare anugati radha-krsna-kunja-seva sadhya sei paya sei sadhya paite ara nahika upaya

"Indeed, other than the *gopis* no one can enter Radha and Krishna's confidential pastimes. Only those who follow in the *gopis'* footsteps, worshiping the Lord in their mood, can realize the ultimate goal of service to Sri Sri Radha-Krishna in the forest bowers of Vrindavan. There is no other procedure for achieving this goal." *(Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.8.204-5)*

A notable feature of Radharani's girlfriends is that they have no personal desire to enjoy intimately with Krishna. Their pleasure is derived entirely from seeing the Divine Couple united, and helping Them to experience the joy of union.

sahaja gopira prema nahe prakrta kama kama-krida-samye tara kahi kama-nama

"The natural love of the *gopis* for Krishna is not mundane sensuality. Nonetheless, because their transcendental love for Krishna resembles the attraction between men and women in this world, it is sometimes given the name *kama*, or lust." *(Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.8.214)*

The *Tantra* and Rupa Gosvami in his *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* similarly state:

*premaiva gopa-ramanam kama ity agamat pratham ity uddhavadayo py
etam vanchanti bhagavat-priyah*

"The divine love of the cowherd women came to be known as lust. Even so, Uddhava and other great beloved devotees of the Lord desire to attain it." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta 1.4.163; Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.285-6*)

The following two Bhagavatam verses exemplify Uddhava's appreciation for the gopis' love for Krishna.

*vande nanda-vraja-strinam pada-renum abhiksnasah yasam hari-
kathodgirnā punati bhuvana-trayam*

"I constantly glorify the dust of the feet of the women of Nanda's cowherd pastures. Their chanting of the activities of Lord Krishna purify the entire universe." (*Srimad Bhagavatam 10.47.63*)

*asam aho carana-renu-jusam aham syam vrndavane him api gulma-
latausadhinam ya dustyajam sva-janam arya-patham ca hitva bhejur mukunda-
padavim srutibhir vimrgyam*

"Ah! Let me become one of Vrindavan's herbs and plants and be regularly sprinkled with the dust of the gopis' feet, for the gopis abandoned their families and their religious principles, both extremely difficult to give up, in order to worship Mukunda, the ultimate objective of all the Vedic literatures." (*Srimad Bhagavatam 10.47.61*)

Kubja and other devotees who did not have the same degree of intense desire for Krishna's pleasure as the gopis but similarly manifested erotic feelings for Him, are said to possess *kama-praya rati*—a love that only resembles that of the gopis. This conclusion is due to Kubja's (and other devotees in similar mood) high degree of desire for her own pleasure. The presence of such desire for personal enjoyment when near Krishna indicates that the love is less pure. For this reason it has been qualified as *kama-praya* (See also *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.287*). Elsewhere, Kubja's love for Krishna is said to be mundane (*sadharani rati*), a far cry from the selfless love demonstrated by Radha and the gopis.

Radha is metaphorically spoken of as the creeper of divine love for Krishna; the *sakhis* are her twigs, branches, leaves, and fruits. Just as the flower blossoms by

receiving water through the roots of the bush, similarly, the *sakhis* and *manjaris* feel joy through the pleasure of Srimati Radharani and not independently from Her. There is a Bengali aphorism that says, *mulete sincile jala, sakha pallavera bala, sire vari nahi karyakari*— "If one sprinkles water on the root, the branches and leaves gain strength. Pouring water on the top of the plant is ineffective." The *sakhis* thus gain greater pleasure from Radha and Krishna's meeting than they would from personally enjoying a tryst with Krishna. Radha, on the other hand, though knowing this indifference of her girlfriends, still sends them to Krishna so that they can experience the bliss of union with Him. This gives Her millions of times more pleasure than Her own personal happiness. Such is the nature of the divine pastimes of the *gopis* and Krishna and the reason it is said that their love cannot be viewed as material lust.

nijendriya-sukha-hetu kamera tatparya krsna-sukha-tatparya gopi-bhava-varya nijendriya-sukha-vancha nahi gopikara krsne sukha dite kare sangama-vihara

"Lust is to be understood as a desire for one's own sensual pleasure. In contrast, the superior mood of the *gopis* is a desire to satisfy Krishna's senses. The *gopis* have not a pinch of desire for their own sensual pleasure and only engage in intimate relations with Krishna to give Him happiness." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.8.216-7)

Following In The Gopis' Footsteps

Having established the supreme purity of the *gopis'* love, Ramananda proceeds to stress the necessity of following in their footsteps:

sei gopi-bhavamrte janra lobha haya veda-dharma-loka tyaji se krsne bhajaya raganuga-marge tanre bhaje jei jana sei-jana pay a vraje vrajendra-nandana vraja-lokera kona bhava lana yei bhaje bhava-yogya deha pana krsna paya vraje tahate drstanta upanisad sruti-gana raga-marge bhaji paila vrajendra-nandana

"One who has a strong desire to taste the nectar of the *gopis'* loving mood abandons all consideration of adhering exclusively to the religious principles of the Vedas, caring not for public opinion, but simply worshipping Krishna. Whoever worships the Lord on the *raganuga* path soon attains the son of Nanda Maharaja in the land of Vraja. Whoever worships Krishna in any of the moods

of the residents of Vraja attains a suitable spiritual body to serve Him there. The examples of this are the personifications of the holy *Upanishads*; by worshiping the Lord on the path of spontaneous love, they attained the lotus feet of Vrajendranandana." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.8.219-22)

vidhi-marge na paile vraje krsnacandra ataeva gopi-bhava kari ahgikara ratri-dina ante radha-krsnera vihara siddha-dehe cinti kare tahanni sevana sakhibhave paya radha-krsnera carana

"One cannot obtain Krishna in Goloka Vrindavan simply by serving Him according to regulative principles. Therefore one should accept the mood of the gopis and meditate night and day on the pastimes of Sri Radha and Krishna. One should meditate on one's eternal spiritual body and use it to serve Radha and Krishna; by so doing one attains the direct association of Their lotus feet." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.8.227-8)

There is no hope of attaining *prema* without accepting the leadership of the gopis, for it is inaccessible to one who looks upon Krishna as an object of awe and veneration. Laksmi is an example of such a person; She worships the Lord but cannot attain Him in Vraja due to Her perception of Him as being the Lord of Vaikuntha.

gopi-anugatya vina aisvarya-jnane bhajileha nahi paya vrajendranandane tahate drstanta laksmi karila bhajana tathapi na paile vraje vrajendranandana

"If one does not follow in the footsteps of the gopis and remains absorbed in the consciousness of the Lord's majesty, one cannot attain the service of the lotus feet of the son of Nanda Maharaja, even though one may be engaged in devotional service. An example of this is the goddess of fortune who worshipped Lord Krishna in order to attain His pastimes in Vrindavan, but failed." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.8.229-30)

In confirmation, the *Bhagavatam* states:

nayam sriyo'nga u nitanta-ratehprasadah svar-yositam nalina-gandha-rucam kuto 'nyah rasotsave 'sya bhujadanda-grhita-kantha-labdhsisam ya udagad vraja-sundarinam

"In the *rasa* dance, the Lord showed His favor to the beauties of Vraja by

placing His powerful arms on their shoulders and dancing with each of them individually. This benediction of extreme love was never experienced by even Laksmidevi, what to speak of the goddesses in the heavenly planets—though the delightful fragrance of lotus flowers emanates from their bodies." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 10.47.60)

Raganuga Bhakti

Devotion that follows in the footsteps of the residents of Vraja is called *raganuga bhakti*. This kind of devotion alone is truly pleasing to Krishna, whereas *vaidhi bhakti* leads not to Vraja but to-Vaikuntha. What then is the means for attaining *raga-bhakti*? One who has experienced the awakening of unblemished faith is eligible to take up the 64 different practices of the *vidhi-marga*. However, greed is the only currency that can purchase consciousness drenched in the various flavors of Krishna bhakti. By continuously hearing about the natural, impetuous affection of the residents of Vraja for the Lord, one who develops such a desire, free from trickery, becomes eligible to attain the nectarean mood of the gopis. Such a person is qualified to worship on the *raganuga* path.

In Vrindavan, Krishna has countless servants like Raktaka, Patraka, Citraka, Bakula, Bhrngara, Bharigura, Jambula, Rasala. His friends include Sridama, Sudama, Vasudama, Stokakrsna, and Subala. His parents are Nanda and Yasoda assisted by other elderly *gopas* and *gopis*. Each of these persons worships Krishna according to his or her particular desire. The devotional mood fully demonstrated by these residents of Vraja is called *ragatmika bhakti*. The devotion which follows in this mood is called *raganuga*.

Devotees on the *raganuga* path engage in unalloyed devotion to Krishna in the moods of servitorship, friendship, parenthood, or conjugal love. Rupa Gosvami quotes the following verse from the *Narayana-vyuha-stava*:

*pati-putra-suhra-bhratr-pitrn an mitravad dharim ye dhyayanti
sadodyuktas tebhya'piha namo namah*

"I pay my repeated obeisances to all those devotees who meditate with great eagerness on the Lord as their husband, son, companion, brother, father, or friend." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.2.308, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.2.163)

In the course of worshipping Krishna in Vraja, the *raganuga-bhakta* intensely

desires to attain the mood of one of these devotees. In consequence he attains a spiritual body appropriate to his selected service and finally, upon attaining perfection, gains the personal association of Krishna. The example is given of the Grasis who accepted the gopis as their guides and thus attained Krishna by following the *raga-marga*.

iste svarasiki ragah paramavistata bhavet tanmayi ya bhaved bhaktih satra ragatmikodita

"The intense and spontaneous absorption in the object of one's adoration (*ista*) is called raga. Devotion characterized by such raga is called *ragatmika bhakti*. " (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.2.272)

In his *Durgama-sangamini* commentary Jiva Gosvami explains that the cause of intense and spontaneous absorption is *prema-mayi trsna*, or divine loving desire. When one's devotion is dominated by such strong desire, it is called *ragatmika bhakti*. This *ragatmika bhakti* is further subdivided into two categories, *kama-rupa* ("erotic") and *sambandha-rupa* ("relational"). When the raga, or intense and spontaneous absorption, is given shape by erotic desire, it is called *kama-rupa*; when it is the result of another type of relation, it is called *sambandha-rupa*.

Although *kama-rupa bhakti* implies a relation, it is the only relation dominated by erotic desire—an exclusive desire to please all the Lord's senses. For this reason, although it has the external appearance of ordinary lust, it is completely pure, otherwise, why would great devotees like Uddhava pray to experience it, as shown in the verses quoted above?

Relational love (*sambandha-rupa*) is that which is experienced by those who pride themselves in being Krishna's parents or having other relationships with Him, such as a friend or servant. All these eternal associates are indicated by the *Bhagavata* verse (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 7.1.30) where it is said that the Vrsnis attained perfection simply through being related to Krishna. Because of their lack of awareness of Krishna's divine power, the love of the cowherders of Vraja is even greater than that of the Vrsnis or Krishna's other relations in Mathura and Dvaraka; they are thus even more exalted.

Lobha, Or Intense Desire, Makes One Eligible For Paganuga Bhakti

Like *ragatmika bhakti*, *raganuga bhakti* has two subdivisions. Those who

intensely desire (*lobha*) to achieve the gopis' love for Krishna are qualified to practice *raganuga bhakti*.

*krsna-bhakti-rasa-bhavita matih kriyatam yadi kuto'pi labhyate tatra laulyam
api mulyam ekalam janma-koti-sukrtair na labhyate*

"Since Krishna consciousness soaked with devotion cannot be achieved even after the practice of hundreds of thousands of pious acts, one must pay the only price by which it can be bought: intense greed to have it. Should one come across this greed, one should grab it eagerly." (*Padyavali* 14, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.8.70)

The word *laulya* (greed), mentioned in the verse above, is a synonym for *lobha*, a word used by Rupa Gosvami to explain the required qualification for entrance into the path of *raganuga-bhakti*. Another synonym for *laulya* is *lalasa*, also used to express this qualification. We must try to understand the meaning of this term. When one's faith is firmly based on a submissive attitude toward scriptural injunctions, one takes up the various activities of devotional service on the *vidhi-marga*. Gradually then one progresses through the stages described by Rupa Gosvami namely, faith, association with devotees, devotional activities, freedom from deficiencies of character, strong determination, taste, attachment, and finally, ecstatic symptoms and love. The beginning of the ecstatic state comes after one attains the stage of attachment (*asakti*). This is then followed by the attainment of pure love or *prema*.

Devotional service on the path of *raganuga bhakti* is based on faith that has intense desire (*lobha*). Such greed or intense desire is extremely rare; Rupa Gosvami explains that when a devotee hears the divinely inspired scriptures like *Srimad Bhagavatam* and *Padma Purana* from the lips of a realized guru, or other descriptions of the sweet pastimes of the Lord with His Vrindavan devotees in the five relations, he becomes affected by the delightful moods expressed by these eternally perfected associates of the Lord. Not only that, he is also delighted by the beauty of the Lord's form and His attributes; when he sees the Lord's deity form, he is enchanted by His beauty as well. Even the slightest amount of such experience causes him to become more and more indifferent to the scriptural injunctions and other theological arguments that encourage service to God. His desire to continue experiencing the sweetness of the Lord and His devotees becomes spontaneous and natural. These are said to be the symptoms of what Rupa terms "the outbreak of greed" (*lobhotpatti*).

Rupa says that those who are on the path of regulative principles continue to depend on scriptural injunctions and logical arguments up to the point of establishing a solid sense of relationship, i.e, *rati*. From this stage, which is equivalent to the dawning of ecstasies called *bhava*, they no longer require any external impetus. The practice of the *raganuga* devotee, however, is based on an internal motivation, called intense desire or greed, from its very inception. He has no need of arguments and Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that precisely because he feels such an seek out information from various sources in order to facilitate his attaining the will consider this a duty.

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami summarizes this as follows:

iste gadha-trsna ragera svarupa-laksana iste avistata ei tatastha-laksana ragamayi-bhaktira haya ragatmika nama taha suni lubdha haya kona bhagyavan lobhe vraja-vasira bhava kare anugati sastra-yukti nahi mane raganugara prakrti

"The essential characteristic of raga, or deep attachment, is a strong thirst for the Supreme Lord. Complete absorption in Him is its marginal characteristic. Devotional service pervaded by such raga is called *ragatmika bhakti*, spontaneous loving service. One is most fortunate if, after hearing about it, one covets such aspiration. If, out of such transcendental desire, one follows in the footsteps of the inhabitants of Vrindavan, one does not care for the injunctions or reasonings of Sastra. Such is the nature of the path which seeks spontaneous love." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.151-3)

"Following in the footsteps" should not be taken for imitation. The following verses from Rupa Gosvami's *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* defining *raganuga bhakti* clearly endorse this notion:

virajantlm abhivyaktam vraja-vasi-janadisuragatmikam anusrtd ya saraganugocyate

"*Rogatmika bhakti*, or devotional service in spontaneous love, is vividly expressed and manifested by the inhabitants of Vrindavan. Devotional practices that follow in the wake of this spontaneous loving attitude are called *raganuga bhakti*. " (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.2.270; *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.154)

tat-tad-bhavadi-madhurye srute dhir yad apeksate natra sastrarn na yuktim ca tal lobhotpatti-laksanam

"On hearing about the sweet moods and activities of Krishna and His devotees in Vraja, one whose mind becomes attracted in such a way that he no longer depends on the instruction of revealed scripture, logic or argument, possesses the symptom indicative of the outbreak of greed." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.2.292, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.155)

seva sadhaka-rupena siddha-rupena catra hi tad-bhava-lipsuna karya vraja-lokanusaratah

"The devotee who intensely desires to attain the *ragatmika* mood of the Vrajavasi associates of Krishna, should engage in the practices of devotional service in his external body as a practitioner, and internally in his spiritual body, always following in the footsteps of the residents of Vraja." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.2.295; *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.158)

krsnam smaran janam casya prestham nija-samihitam tat-tat-katha-ratas casau kuryad vasam vraje sada

"Remembering Krishna and one of His dearest and closest devotees, one should constantly remain absorbed in hearing about their loving relations. In this way, one should make one's permanent residence in Vraja." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.2.294, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.160)

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami's rendition of these verses is as follows:

bahya antara ihara dui ta sadhana bahye sadhaka-dehe kare sravana-kirtana mane nija-siddha-deha kariya bhavana ratri-dine kare vraje krsnera sevana nijabhista krsna-prestha pacheta lagiya nirantara seva kare antarmana hana

"*Raganuga bhakti* is practiced both externally and internally. In the external body, the practitioner engages in hearing and chanting; in his mind, however, he meditates on his spiritual body and serves Krishna in

Vrindavan, day and night. In his mind, he constantly serves Krishna following closely in the mood of his favorite devotee in Vraja, one who is most dear to the Lord." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.156-7, 159)

The *sadhaka-rupa* is the body of the practitioner, or the body one occupies while externally practicing devotional service. The *siddha-rupa* is the spiritual body;

the desired form suitable for executing the service to Krishna which is dear to one's heart. In both of these bodies one must follow the particular devotee beloved of the Lord whose mood one has great eagerness to achieve, such as Srimati Radharani, Lalita, Visakha or Sri Rupa Manjari on one level, and on another, Sri Rupa and Sanatana Gosvamis and their entourage. One should follow these personalities, and serve the Lord on both those levels. In the external body one should engage in the types of service executed by Rupa and Sanatana. In the meditation body, or *siddha-deha*, one should serve in the way shown by Radha, Lalita, Visakha, and Rupa Manjari. Never is a practitioner to imitate these devotees, on either level.

The daughter of Srinivasa Acarya, Srimati Hemalata Thakurani, had a disciple whom she later excommunicated for his unorthodox views—which he taught in Assam's Surma Valley area. This deviant disciple, Rupa Kaviraja, taught that since the *gopis* did not take shelter of a guru, observe the Ekadasi fast, or worship the Salagrama and Tulasi Devi, it wasn't necessary for their followers to do so either. Visvanatha Cakravarti strongly refuted this doctrine (which he named the *Sauramya-mata*, after the region where it was popular). This doctrine interprets the words *vraja-loka* in Rupa Gosvami's verse to mean Krishna's mistresses in Vraja like Radha and Candravali. This school of thought still has its representatives in Vrindavan today at Ghontar Kunj. Like the Atibari school, its adepts wear only one strand of *tulasi* neck beads and are also known as Vamakaupims. Because they are mere imitators of the eternal associates of Krishna, they are excluded from pure Vaishnava society.¹

Genuine *raganuga-bhaktas* remain devotedly engaged in the type of service they desire according to the direction of the guru. Thus, their love for Krishna quickly develops and they attain the stage of ecstasies and pure love. The first stage of love's manifestation is called *bhava-bhakti*, later intensified, it becomes the full manifestation of love called *prema-bhakti*.

ei mata kare jeba raganuga-bhakti krsnera carane tanra upajaya priti

"One who engages in *raganuga bhakti* in this way develops love for the lotus feet of Krishna." (Chaitanya *Charitamrta* 2.22.164)

Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, my most revered spiritual master, wrote in his *Anubhasya* commentary to these verses, "One must serve in one's devotee form by repeating the *hari-katha* heard from his spiritual masters,

and mentally serve Radha and Krishna directly in Vraja in a spiritual body appropriate to that service and one's own mood. One who serves in this way is no longer on the *vaidhi bhakti* path, and is no longer motivated exclusively by the words of the guru and the scripture. Rather, on the strength of his naturally awakened taste (*ruci*) for devotional service, he is travelling on the path of *raganuga bhakti* and soon reaches the destination of intense love for Krishna. When one comes to the level of ecstatic moods (*bhava*) on the *raganuga* path, one quickly brings Krishna under his influence and at this point attains Krishna's loving service."

Harinama: The Means To Awakening Lobha

It is generally believed that *raga-marga* condones licentiousness, that it is antinomian. Naturally, such belief is incorrect. One cannot follow the *raganuga* path without first attaining the required qualification of intense eagerness. When such intense eagerness arises, then love alone gives the practitioner direction. At this point, the underlying purpose of all activities of the *vidhi-marga* becomes clear to the practitioner, so even if he becomes less consistent in some of his practices, his heart and soul are constantly, indefatigably engaged in the culture of Krishna consciousness. Although he may become somewhat *lak* in other areas of devotional life, he never diminishes his interest in hearing and chanting the Holy Names.

The awakening of the *lobha* which qualifies one for *raganuga bhakti* is not to be taken cheaply, as if easy to attain. Does this mean the *jiva* has no chance of experiencing it? In answer, Bhaktivinoda Thakura wrote as follows:

vidhi-marga-rata jane svadhinata ratna dane raga-marge karan pravesa raga-vasa-varti haye parakiya rasasraye labhe jiva krsna premavesa

"To the person fixed in the regulative principles, the Holy Name gives the jewel of independence and places him on the path of spontaneous devotion. That person, overcome by spontaneous attachment to the Lord, takes shelter of the *parakiya* mood and thus attains absorption in love for Krishna."

Mahaprabhu invested all His energies into His holy name. The five *rasas*—neutrality, servitude, friendship, parenthood, and consortherhood, are present in full splendor in the Name of Him who embodies all the unlimited moods of loving exchange. Thus Bhaktivinoda also sings, *akhila-rasera khani krsna nama*

cintamani — "Krishna's name is a philosopher's stone. It is a gold mine filled with the unlimited moods of loving exchange."

If one wishes to win the treasure of love of God, one must accept the leadership of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in every way. One must take initiation and inspiration in His line of teachings, chiefly taking to the chanting of the Holy Name — the 16 names and 32 syllables of the Hare Krishna *Maha-mantra*.

In the *Bhagavatam*, the ninth Yogindra, Karabhajana, states that Mahaprabhu is the full incarnation of the Lord.

krsna-varnam tvisakrsnam sangopangastra-parsadam yajnah sankirtana-prayair yajanti hi su-medhasah

"In the Age of Kali, the golden Lord, upon whose lips the name of Krishna always remains, appears in the company of His expansions, portions, weapons and associates. Those who are very intelligent will worship Him through the sacrifice of congregational glorification (*sarikirtana-yajna*)" (11.5.32)

This prediction contains much information about Mahaprabhu's avatar: the words *krsna-varnam* indicate that the two syllables (*varna*), *kr-sna*, are constantly being glorified by the Lord. That is, through *kirtana*, He is always instructing the world in Krishna consciousness. It also means that in His devotional mood, He is constantly seeking Krishna by calling His Name. The words *sangoparigastra-parsadam* refer to the Lord's associates. His *angas*, or "bodies," are Nityananda Prabhu and Advaita Prabhu, who are different forms of the Lord. His *uparigas*, or minor limbs, are the Lord's devotees like Srivasa Pundit who have taken shelter of Him. His *astra*, or "weapon," is the Holy Name; and His *parsadas*, "associates," are His energies such as Gadadhara, Svarupa Damodara, Ramananda, Sanatana, and Rupa. The Lord's bodily color is *akrsna*, or "not black," which in combination with other statements in the *Bhagavatam* indicates that He is golden in hue. Thus, although internally black (Krishna), externally He is golden (Gaura). The meaning of gold in this verse is that Lord Gauranga has taken the color of Srimati Radharani as well as Her internal mood. In the Age of Kali, the most intelligent people will worship Lord Krishna in this form through the chanting of the Holy Names.

When Mahaprabhu wrapped His arms around His intimate associates

Ramananda and Svarupa Damodara and ecstatically told them that the Holy Names are the only means for entering into an understanding of bhakti-rasa, He most clearly indicated that His teaching is centered on the chanting of the Holy Names. He said: "My dear Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Raya, know from Me that chanting of the Holy Names is the most feasible means of salvation in this age of Kali. In this age, the process of worshiping Krishna is to perform sacrifice by chanting the Holy Name. One who does so is certainly very intelligent, and attains shelter at the lotus feet of Krishna. Simply by chanting the holy name of Lord Krishna, one is freed from all undesirable habits. This is the means of awakening all good fortune and bringing about the flow of waves of love for Krishna." (Chaitanya Charitamrta 3.20.8-9,11)

Mahaprabhu explained to Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Raya the attitude one should have while chanting:

trnad api sunicena taror iva sahisnuna amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada harih

"One should chant the holy name of the Lord while thinking oneself to be lower than straw in the street. He should be more tolerant than the tree, expect no respect for oneself and give all respect to others." (Chaitanya Charitamrta 3.20.21)

If one can chant the Holy Name in this spirit, the auspicious awakening of intense desire for love of Krishna in the mood of the Vrajavasis will soon develop in one's heart. A person who is deprived of this wealth is truly poor and wretched. The devotee therefore prays:

prema-dhana vina vyartha daridra jivana dasa kari betana more deha prema-dhana

"Without love for Krishna, my life is poverty-stricken and meaningless. Therefore I pray that You make me your servant and for my salary pay me with ecstatic love of God." (Chaitanya Charitamrta 3.20.37)

The chanting of the Holy Names is the best and most powerful of all spiritual practices. Alone, it not only destroys all the contaminations that sully the consciousness of the practitioner, but can bestow upon him the most valuable possession, love for God. One who possesses this love for the Divine Couple, Radha and Krishna, is the wealthiest. If one's ambition is to achieve these riches,

then he should wholeheartedly glorify the chanting of the Holy Name as above everything. All of Mahaprabhu's associates set this example by their own behavior.

Our most worshipable spiritual master Srila Prabhupada often quoted Jiva Gosvami from the *Bhakti-sandarbhā*: "First it is expected that one should hear the Lord's names in order to purify the inner self' (*prathamam namnah sravanam antahkarana-suddhy-artham apeksyam*).

Prabhupada explains that only after one's mind and intelligence are purified by the chanting of the Holy Names can one hear about Krishna's form, qualities, associates, and finally, pastimes. One who has not yet reached the stage of *ruci*, or taste for devotional service, may prematurely go to a pretender guru to take initiation and instruction in *raganuga bhakti* without first making an effort to chant the Holy Name without committing offenses. Such a person may then make a pretense of relishing Krishna's *lila* while still affected by materialistic contamination, but such an attempt will not succeed in bringing him love for the Divine Couple and service for Them in the spiritual abode."

The *sadhya-sadhana-tattva* is fully explained in the teachings of Ramananda Raya, but it is clear from the words of Srila Prabhupada mentioned above that the practices that lead to the supreme goal of service to the Divine Couple, are only possible through the purificatory process of chanting the Holy Name. The Lord Himself confirmed this statement when He said *iha haite sarva-siddhi haibe sabara*: "From the chanting of the Holy Name, all perfections will come to everyone." "All perfections" refers to the perfections of spiritual life. Even though the love of the inhabitants of Vraja described by Ramananda Raya is the most secret treasure of the Vedic storehouse of knowledge, the impossible feat of winning this great prize can be accomplished by the mercy of the Holy Name; it can achieve miracles. Mahaprabhu stated to Tapana Misra, Raghunatha Bhatta Gosvamis grandfather: "The object of life and the means to attain it are found through the chanting of the Holy Names," and "As you repeatedly practice the chanting of the Holy Name, the seedling of love will sprout and you will then know both the goal of life and the means to attain it." ²

To Sanatana Gosvami, Mahaprabhu said that although the nine processes of devotional service are capable of bestowing *Krishnaprema*, the chanting of the Holy Names is still the topmost process (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 3.4.70-1). This statement clearly confirms that the ultimate goal of life and all perfection are

attained through the Holy Name. Thus, worshiping the Holy Name should be given priority over all other devotional activities, and should be recognized as the supreme means of attaining perfection.

The Names of the Divine Couple possess unequalled characteristics. Both are the means and the goal of spiritual life. To reveal this truth, the Lord Himself descended onto this earth in the form of the Holy Name, and as Mahaprabhu, showed that the chanting of the Holy Name is the supreme form of worship.

nama cintamanih krsnas caitanya-rasa-vigraha purnah suddho nitya-mukto 'bhinnatvan nama-naminoh

"The Holy Name is a transcendental philosopher's stone, for it is the embodiment of all conscious delight. It is complete, pure, and eternally liberated, being nondifferent from Krishna Himself. It is not a material name therefore there is no difference between the Name and the One who is named." (Padma Parana, Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.233; Chaitanya Charitamrta 17.133)

The *Brahma-samhita* states, "That which you meditate on in your life of *sadhana* will be achieved in the perfectional stage" (*yadrsi bhavana yasya siddhir bhavati tadrsi*). In his *Prema-bhakti-candrika*, Narottama dasa says, "*sadhane bhabibe jaha, siddha dehe pabe taha*." One should, therefore, continuously reveal to the Holy Name one's desire for *vraja-prema* while chanting under the direction of Sri Guru, Rupa and Svarupa Damodara, without offenses. As one chants in this way, the Holy Name will be merciful and grant one the perfection of *vraja-prema*, for the Lord Himself has stated that all perfections come to one by the grace of the Holy Name (*iha haite sarva siddhi haibe sabara*).

Great authorities teach that one should remember the pastimes of the Lord according to the eight times of day in relation to the eight verses of the Siksastaka. In his *Bhakti-sandarbha* Jiva Gosvami states that in Kali Yuga any type of devotional service must be done in conjunction with the chanting of the Holy Name (*yadyapi any a bhaktih kalau kartavya tada kirtanakhya-bhakti-samyojanenaiva*). One should not give up *kirtana* in order to engage in *smarana*. The essence of Mahaprabhu's teachings in relation to *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana* are all contained within His Siksastaka, the essence of all scriptures.

The Necessity Of Gaura-nitai's Mercy

In his *Namastakam* (verse 7), Rupa Gosvami indicates that the Name is even more merciful than the Named:

vacyo vacakam ity udeti bhavato namasvarupa-dvayam purvasmat param eva hanta karuna tatrapi janimahe yas tasmin vihitaparadha-nivahah prani samantad bhaved asyenedam upasya so'pi hi sadanandambudhau majjati

"O Lord! You manifest in two different forms, as He who is Named and as the Name. Of the two, I consider the second to be more merciful than the first. Even if one has committed countless offenses to the Named, one can still be immersed in an ocean of ambrosia by worshiping the Name."

However, in the *Padma Purana*, clear distinctions are drawn between three categories of chanting: the pure Name (*suddha-nama*), the reflection of the Name (*namabhasa*), and offensive chanting (*namaparadha*). The following verses spoken by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu clearly indicate that only one who chants without offenses is qualified to receive the riches of love for Krishna.

bhajanera madhye srestha nava-vidha bhakti krsna-prema, krsna dite dhare maha-sakti tara madhye sarva-srestha nama-sankirtana niraparadhe laile nama paya prema-dhana

"Of the many ways of executing devotional service, there are nine varieties which are considered to be the best, for they possess a great capacity to deliver love for Krishna and thus Krishna Himself. Of these nine processes of devotional service, the most important is the chanting of the Lord's holy name, for if one chants without committing offenses one obtains the treasure of love for the Lord." (Chaitanya Charitamrta 3.4.70-1)

One should exercise all caution not to incur any offense to the Holy Name. In taking shelter of the most merciful and munificent Gaura-Nitai, within a very short time one will have one's heart purified and will be eligible then to attain Radha-Krishna prema.

gauranga-bhajana sahaja ati sahaja tara phala vitati gauranga baliya krandana kare suvimala prema anvesaya tare

"The worship of Gauranga is not difficult — it is easy to gather all its fruits.

Prema comes looking for one who cries while calling out the name of Gauranga."

Mahaprabhu and Nitai Prabhu are the most benevolent. That They saved the brothers Jagai and Madhai is not considered a very great thing — it would only take one of Their merciful glances to save the brothers even though they were offenders. The most merciful Gaurahari, through various tricks, delivered even Devananda Pundit, who committed a serious offense to the Vaishnava Srivasa Pundit.

Remembering Their mercy, one who wishes to advance in the path of *raganuga bhakti* should constantly pray humbly to Lord Chaitanya and Lord Nityananda as Narottama dasa Thakura prays in his *Prarthana*:

*ara kabe nitai candera karuna haibe samsara-vasana mora kabe tuccha
habe visaya chariya kabe suddha habe mana kabe hama heraba se sri-
vrndavana rupa-raghunatha pade haibe akuti kabe hama bujhaba se yugala
piriti*

"When will Nitai Canda be merciful to me? When will my desires for material enjoyments and family life become insignificant? When will I give up the sense objects and have a pure mind? When will I see the land of Vrindavan? When will I have eagerness to beg the mercy of Rupa and Raghunatha? And when will I be able to understand the love of the Divine Couple?"

Distressed at how, despite the Lord's mercy, we still deceive ourselves and remain bereft of the great gifts He came to give, Narottama prays to Gauranga as follows:

*gora pahun na bhajiya mainu prema-ratana-dhana helaya harainu adhane
jatana kari dhana teyaginu apana karama dose apani dubinu sat-sanga chari
kainu asate vilasa te karane lagala karma-bandha phansa visama visaya bisa
satata khainu gauranga kirtana rasa magana na hainu kena va achaye prana ki
sukha lagiya narottama dasa kena na gela mariya*

"I did not worship Lord Gauranga and so I succumbed. I have carelessly cast away the treasure of love for Krishna. Thus I have lost the most valuable treasure and only made efforts to gain what is valueless. Due to this fault of mine, I have sunk to the lowest level. Disregarding the association of the holy, I have amused myself in the company of the wicked. Is it any wonder that the

noose of karmic reaction is dangling around my neck? I have eaten the horrible poison of material sense gratification and have not become absorbed in the taste of *sankirtana* taught by Gauranga Mahaprabhu. What pleasure still keeps me alive today? Narottama dasa wonders, 'Why have I not died from this misery?'"

Bhaktivinoda's Prayer To Nrsimhadeva

One who becomes greedy for the mood experienced by the residents of Vraja spontaneously takes to the practice of *raganuga bhakti*. A very rare phenomenon, it only comes about through the mercy of an advanced devotee. Such good fortune is achieved only when one takes shelter of a devotee who is exclusively committed to chanting the Lord's holy names. One who makes a pretense of qualification is a self-deceiver, forever deprived of the mercy of Nityananda-Balarama, and loses the valuable opportunity of ever attaining the jewel of love for Radha and Krishna.

nitaiera karuna habe vraje radha-krsnapabe dhara nitaira carana du'khani

"When Nitai shows one His mercy, then one attains Radha and Krishna in Vraja. So hold on tightly to Nitai's lotus feet." (*Prarthana*)

If desirous of entering the path of advanced worship, a devotee must first strive to eliminate his flaws in the form of lust, anger, and greed. Narottama dasa Thakura instructs us that if we have the association of advanced devotees we will be protected from the influence of lust, anger, and greed. But association of devotees who are expert in the process of devotional service, knowledgeable in the art of sacred rapture, attached to Krishna, and free from material contamination, is rare. Therefore, the most merciful spiritual authority, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, in the *Navadvipa-bhava-taranga*, prays to Nrsimhadeva—who puts an end to all obstacles on the spiritual path. Prayers such as this are the only hope for fallen, conditioned souls like us. The prayer is part of a description of the Nrsimha temple situated in Devapalli, a village on the island of Godruma, in Nabadwip *dhama*.

"When will I see the beauty of the village known as Devapalli and roll in the dust of the temple of Nrsimhadeva in ecstatic love? I will sincerely beg Nrsimha to give me love for Krishna and pray to Him to clean my heart of the six enemies, starting with lust, dishonesty, hope for prestige, and corruption. I will

fall at Nrsimha's feet crying and praying for desire to serve Krishna. I will ask to engage in the worship of Nabadwip's Divine Couple without any obstacle. Fear itself is afraid of Lord Nrsimha. When will He be pleased and merciful to me? Even though Nrsimha's form is fearsome to the wicked, He is extremely gentle to Prahlada and other devotees of Krishna.

"When will He be kind to me and speak compassionately, promising to protect me from all dangers even though I am a fool and without any worth? He will say to me, 'Go and freely reside in the land of Sri Gauranga. You shall have affection for the Holy Name and you shall engage in *yugala-bhajana*, the service of the Divine Couple. By the grace of My devotees, all obstacles shall be removed. Now go and experience the ecstasy of worshiping Radha and Krishna with a pure mind.'

"When will Lord Nrsimha, having said words such as these, place His lotus feet upon my head? There, at the gates of Nrsimha's temple, I will roll in the dust in the ecstasy of love for the Divine Couple which will suddenly descend upon me by His mercy."

When, out of His kindness, Nrsimhadeva mercifully eliminates the obstacles of devotional life, one advances fearlessly and unobstructed on the spiritual path designated by the guru. When the spiritual master is merciful, one obtains the fortune of attaining love for Radha and Krishna.

The Supreme Lord Krishna felt so intensely indebted to Radha's love that He took on Her mood and bodily hue and descended to Jagannatha Puri where He called out:

kahari krsna prananaatha muralivadana kahan jan kahan pan vrajendranandana

"Where is my beloved Krishna? Where is the flute-player? Where can I find the son of Nanda?" (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.12.5)

Calling out for Krishna in this way, and crying so intensely that His tears washed over His chest, Mahaprabhu embraced His close associates, Ramananda Raya and Svarupa Damodara, and revealed to them the most intimate aspects of Radharani's mood in separation from Her Lord. Such is the secret essence of *bhajana*. If the Lord Himself had not taken on the mood of His personal potency, Srimati Radharani, and demonstrated to the people of the world how She worships Him, such truth wouldn't be known. Therefore, no other gift can

compare with the gift from Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Even by a brief glimpse into the nature of His gift, the greatest benefit to the conditioned living entities of this world is brought about.

Gaurahari is the deity of love. One who has the good fortune of discussing His pastimes of distributing the fruits of love of Godhead attains the goal of life. Historians will look in time and see that even during the periods when Hindus and Muslims were engaged in conflict, the preaching of Mahaprabhu's teachings of love of God went on with great force. Nothing stopped it or even slowed it down. The entire land of Bharatavarsa was inundated with the flood of prema; the sounds of the Holy Name were everywhere and even many non-Hindus like the Muslims were initiated into His religion of love. Thus it is proved that, to the extent that people engage in discussing Mahaprabhu's munificent pastimes of distributing love to even the lowest members of human society, things like hatred, jealousy and violence will be driven away. People will become more generous, and develop a sense of universal fraternity, embracing everyone in the understanding that the entire world is a single family—*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. Thus, the understanding of the conditioned souls' eternal identity will be awakened and everyone will then engage in the worship of the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna. In a world formed by this consciousness, the true ideal of communism will be easily achieved and supreme peace will reign.

If wealthy with the love of the Divine Couple, one is eternally freed from the distress of any kind of poverty.

CHAPTER 15 THE DISCIPLE'S MENTALITY

The word *diksa* refers to the process of surrendering to a spiritual master. The genuine spiritual master is one who is most dear to the Supreme Lord, one who is His intimate associate. A person who takes shelter of such a spiritual master is recognized by Krishna as one of His own. The Lord immediately bestows a transcendental body on such a surrendered soul and, in this body, the disciple has the good fortune to serve the divine form of the Lord.

The primary characteristic of a disciple who has received initiation and direction in the practice of worship from his spiritual master is *visrambha*, an honest desire for faithful and loving service to the spiritual master, the Vaishnavas and the Supreme Lord. The secondary characteristic is that he seeks to destroy all his sinful activities.

The *divya-jnana*, the transcendental knowledge of *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana*, is received by the disciple as part of initiation. The self-revealed scriptures, the Vedas, are the supreme authority (*pramana*) on spiritual subject matters. The scripture and the nine *prameya* (teachings) based on scripture are collectively called *dasa-mula*, the ten basic elements of spiritual knowledge. The nine *prameya* consist of the seven aspects of relationships (*sambandha*)—Krishna Himself, Krishna's energies, Krishna's divine mood (*rasa*), the soul, its bondage and its liberation, and the inconceivable oneness and difference of the Lord and the individual soul. To these seven are added *abhidheya*, bhakti, and *prayojana*, love of God.

Along with all of this knowledge comes an important side effect: the destruction of one's sinful reactions. Thus the direct result of initiation is love for Krishna. Mahaprabhu confirms this in the following statement to His own spiritual master:

kiba mantra dile gosani kiba tara bala japitejapite mantra karila pagala

"What mantra have you given me, O Gurudeva! What powers does it possess? As I chant this mantra, I feel that it is turning me into a madman." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.7.81)

If one does not develop love for Krishna nor feels any attachment to the chanting of the Holy Names after being initiated, but remains inclined to sinful activities, falling down from time to time, it is then clear that either knowingly or unknowingly, that person has committed terrible offenses to the Lord, the guru or the Vaishnavas. One should then think: "I have only made a pretense of surrendering myself. I have used my initiation simply as an excuse to engage in sense gratificatory activities."

Ignorance Means Rejecting The Lord

A lack of interest in the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna is the conditioned soul's chief defect. The basis of all sin is ignorance, whose symptom is the rejection of Krishna. The seed of all sin, i.e., the tendency to sin, is present in the flaw of ignorance. From there, sinful activity is inevitable.

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami compares this deficiency in the conditioned *jivas* to coming under the influence of a witch's spell.

*sei dose maya pisaci danda kare tare adhyatmikadi tapa-traya tare jari
mare kama krodhera dasa hana tara lathi khaya bhramite bhramite jadi sadhu-
vaidya paya tanra upadesa-mantre pisaci palaya krsna-bhakti paya tabe krsna
nikate jaya*

"For rejecting Krishna, the witch of illusion punishes the *jiva*, causing him to suffer the three kinds of misery—*adhyatmika*, *adhibhautika*, and *adhidaivika*. The unfortunate conditioned soul then becomes the slave of his desires and his frustrations, suffering their kicks and abuse. After wandering through the universe in this condition, if he somehow finds a saintly person to act as an exorcist, then through his powerful instructions, the witch's mastery is overcome and she runs for her life. The fortunate individual then finds pure devotion to Krishna and goes to Him." (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.13-15)

The devotee then turns to Krishna and prays as follows:

*kamadinam kati na katidha palita durnidesas tesani jata mayi na karuna na
trapa nopasantih utsrjyaitan atha yadupate sampratam labdha-buddhis tvam
ayatah saranam abhayam mam niyunksyatma-dasye*

"I carried out so many evil orders of my wicked masters—lust, anger, greed, bewilderment, intoxication, and envy—that I have lost count. Yet, despite my

faithful service, these masters have never taken pity on me. I am so shameless that the faintest desire for devotional service has never once manifested in my heart. O Lord of the Yadus, today I have finally come to my senses and I throw off my shackles to take shelter of Your fearless lotus feet; please engage me in Your personal service." (*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 3.2.25, *Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.22.16)

Characteristics Of Purity

Pariksit Maharaja made the following significant statement about how one can recognize purity in a devotee's character: "The person whose self has been washed clean never abandons Krishna's lotus feet (*dhautatmapurusah krsna-pada-mulam na muncati—SrimadBhagavatam* 2.8.6)."

Visvanatha further clarifies: "The sign of a pure heart is the inability to abandon the service to Krishna's lotus feet" (*mat-pada-seva-tyagasamarthyam eva suddha-cittatva-cihnam*). If somehow or other one sees that such a devotee is affected by lust or anger, such incidental characteristics should be considered like the bite of a snake with broken teeth; an insignificant setback which does not have long-term effects on the devotee's devotional life (*atah kvacit kama-krodhadi-sattve'pi utkhata-damstroraga-damsanavat tasyakim-citkaratvam jneyam*). There is no poison in a snake's broken fangs, so its bite is not considered a significant problem, even though it appears very dangerous to the uninformed observer. Similarly, lust, anger and greed may cause some disturbance in a devotee's mind, but do not result in his mind being permanently contaminated."

The Lord accepts the offerings of those devotees of purified mind. Other than the association of such pure devotees, the jiva has no other hope of attaining any value of significance in life.

One should not think, however, that all one has to do is to sit and listen to the spiritual master's instructions. One has to act according to those instructions. If a disciple does not take up the devotional practices or sadhana recommended by the guru then how can he expect to achieve spiritual perfection?

In the *Chaitanya Charitamrta* (2.22.25), the Lord says that, on receiving initiation from the spiritual master, one should worship Krishna and serve the guru. Then one becomes free from the control of *maya* and attains Krishna's

lotus feet.

tate krsna bhaje kare gurura sevana maya-jala chute paya krsnera carana

In his commentary to the above-mentioned verse, Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura writes: "It is through a combination of *bhajana* and service to the spiritual master that one becomes free of *maya's* net and attains Krishna's lotus feet."

Srila Prabhupada also says, "Our eternal spiritual identity is to be the dust of the lotus feet of Rupa and Raghunatha." Therefore, we have no other duty in life than to follow their example. He has further affirmed, "Without the performance of *harinama-sankirtana*, no other practices of Bhakti yoga such as residence in Mathura or association with devotees are complete. However, even if I only engage in *harinama-sankirtana*, I will win all the fruits of residence in Mathura, associating with devotees, serving the deity in loving faith, and listening to the *Bhagavatam*. Simply through *harinama-sankirtana*, all perfections come to the *jiva*. "

Our spiritual master instructed us to chant 100,000 Names daily without offense, keeping our objectives clear. If we cannot follow this instruction, how can we expect to become free of all the contamination in our hearts? As stated by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the performance of *harinama-sankirtana* is glorious in seven ways. It cleans the mirror of the heart (*ceto-darpana-marjanam*); it extinguishes the conflagration of material life (*bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam*); it distributes the cooling moon rays of auspiciousness (*sreyah-kairava-candrika-vitaranam*); it is the life of transcendental knowledge, which is like its consort (*vidya-vadhu-jivanam*), it increases the ocean of divine bliss (*anandambudhi-varadhanam*); at every step, it gives a taste of the full ambrosia for which we have always been anxious (*pratipadam purnamrtasvadanam*); and it bathes the entire self in divine ecstasy (*sarvatma-snapanam*). Mahaprabhu Himself repeatedly stated that there was no worship superior to the worship of the Holy Names. "All will attain perfection through the chanting of the Holy Names. Chant these Names constantly; I give you no other rules." (Chaitanya Bhagavata 2.23.78)

Do we have any hope of attaining the supreme good if we ignore these instructions of the Lord and the spiritual master?

The Servant's Vow Of Service

The devotee who desires to reach the level of *nistha* should make the following vow:

"According to the instruction of my spiritual master, I must absolutely complete chanting a fixed number of Names on my *japa* beads daily, as well as daily offer a fixed number of obeisances to the devotees and to the deity form of the Lord. I absolutely must perform my prescribed service at certain fixed times of the day. I must observe the fortnightly Ekadasi fast. Upon rising in the *brahma-muhurta* period, before dawn, I shall remember Krishna and His devotees' lotus feet in a particular way, then bathe. After this, I will sit down and meditate on the mantra into which my guru has initiated me. Then I will perform *puja* to the deity, study the devotional scriptures, and sing the hymns written by the great authorities. All these things I shall do every day without fail.

"I shall never entertain thoughts of anything other than Krishna. I shall absolutely give up all useless controversy and gossip. Every day, I shall unfailingly hear the spiritual instructions of my guru and advanced devotees and then discuss those topics with my godbrothers, rather than wasting time in fruitless conversations. I will not allow any of the valuable time given to me in this human form of life to be wasted by giving way to sloth and laziness. I will therefore not lose a moment to sleep that is not absolutely necessary for maintaining my body, but will employ every moment in a way that is spiritually profitable.

"I will be very careful to avoid the association of anyone who is overly attached to material enjoyments, or of the wives of other men, or of womanizing men. Indeed, I shall avoid the company of anyone who is not a devotee of Krishna, for it is said:

asat-sanga tyaga ei vaisnava acara

"The essence of Vaishnava behavior is to give up the association of the unsaintly. By unsaintly it is meant those who are attached to the opposite sex and those who are non-devotees.' (*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 2.12.195)

"Every day without fail I will complete chanting the *Maha-mantra* consisting of 16 names and 32 syllables a fixed number of times. Even when not chanting on my beads, I will constantly repeat these names without counting. Without

completing my japa and chanting my *ista-mantra*, I will not even touch water, what to speak of taking food. My spiritual master who has initiated me with the *ista-mantra* is my only true friend in both this world and the next. If I cannot win his pleasure, then all my spiritual practices are for nought. Through his mercy I can win the mercy of the Supreme Lord. If I displease him I have no other recourse. If Krishna is displeased with me, my spiritual master can intervene on my behalf, but if the spiritual master is angry or dissatisfied with my actions, then all my spiritual practices are as worthless as oblations of clarified butter poured on the remains of a fire sacrifice. The service of my spiritual master's lotus feet is the real treasure of my spiritual life. Any spiritual practice performed independently of him is without value. Whatever hearing or chanting I engage in should be done for the pleasure of my spiritual master alone. I should always meditate on these words sung by Narottama dasa:

sei vrata, sei tapa sei mora mantra japa sei mora dharama karama

"The feet of Sri Rupa Manjari are my real wealth. They are the object of my vows. They are the goal of my austerities and penances, they are the goal of my mantra and my japa. They are the purpose of my religious observances, my every activity.'(Prarthana 8)

"If my guru rebukes or criticizes me, I should take it as a great fortune. I should remember that whatever spiritual practice I engage in, all is being done for his pleasure. I should give this consideration pride of place in my consciousness, remembering Sarvabhauma's words to Mahaprabhu: *ajna gurunam hy avicaraniya*: The orders of our gurus are never to be debated.' (Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.10.145)

"I pray that my intelligence never becomes so contaminated that I criticize the words of my spiritual master. May such a wicked mentality never manifest in my heart, not even in my dreams. Any arrangement he makes for me is for my ultimate good. I pray that I never consider him to be an ordinary mortal by entertaining negative judgements of his words or actions. I will always remain on my guard against such a disaster.

"Because the guru is affectionate towards his disciples, if I approach him with my doubts, he will lay those doubts to rest with his answers. May I never forget for even a moment that my spiritual master is the source of all auspiciousness. The Supreme Lord has taken the form of my guru in order to give me the mercy

of initiation and spiritual teaching. May I never forget at any time this manifestation of compassion of the Lord's revealed form as the guru. The duty of the disciple is to always seek the pleasure of his spiritual master, whose only purpose is to carry out the orders of the Supreme Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu on this earth. I should always consider the servants of my guru to be worthy of my respect. Whoever is dear to my guru is dear to me.

"If I can keep on doing my devotional service with this attitude of unswerving, constant faith in my spiritual master, then through his satisfaction I will quickly become qualified for all perfections. My spiritual master has assured me that through the Holy Name I can attain all perfection, therefore, I will faithfully chant the Holy Names without committing offenses, while always making a determined effort to strictly follow his orders. On the strength of the Holy Names in which my guru has instructed me, I will become eligible for the treasure of *raganuga bhakti* and for the great fortune to taste the sweet flavors of the most elevated spiritual relations, never given prior to the appearance of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu."

The Devotee's Prayer

Sri Guru's mercy is everything — *guru-krpa hi kevalam*. Therefore one should pray as follows:

"I am most fallen and useless, O Lord. May my spiritual master be pleased with me. May he give me the spiritual strength to follow his directions. May all the obstacles in my worship of the Lord be removed so that at the end of my sojourn in this world, I may sit alone far from the hustle and bustle of the material world, and with a steady mind, chant the Holy Names with feeling. May the Lord be merciful and allow me to give up my last breath in this way. Knowingly or unknowingly I have committed so many offenses to His lotus feet, and even now I continue to commit such offenses. O Lord, please forgive all such offenses and give me a place at Your lotus feet. Make my life complete by allowing me to associate with those who are dear to You.

"For so long I have simply made a pretense of being initiated. In fact, I have not done that which a surrendered soul should do; I have not strictly followed my spiritual master's instructions, thus I have not made even a little advancement in spiritual life. All the contaminations in my heart prior to initiation are still there today, so how is there any hope of my attaining the divine realization which is

said to be the real sign of initiation? Like a lump of iron my heart is without feelings. Even though I chant the Holy Names, it does not melt. Thus I am thinking,

aparadha phale mama citta bhela vajra-sama tuwa name na labhe vikara

"Due to offenses, my heart has become as hard as a thunderbolt. Therefore no ecstatic transformations take place when I chant your name." (Bhaktivinoda Thakura)

tabe jani tahe aparadha achaye pracura krsna-nama bija tahe na haya ankura

"Thus I know I have committed so many offenses to the Holy Name; for though I have planted the seed of the Name, no creeper of love has sprouted."
(*Chaitanya Charitamrta* 1.8.29)

"O Gurudeva! Now in the evening of my life, I have become so forlorn and hopeless. O Lord! O You who see no fault in anyone! Be generous to me and give me your mercy. Help me to be free of all offenses so I develop a taste for the Holy Names which you have instructed me to chant. Allow me to earn the right to be called the genuine servant of your servants. With your divine vision, you see me perfectly, externally and internally. You know everything I do; therefore I pray that everything I do—my behavior, my devotional service—be a source of pleasure to you.

"O Lord, forgive all my offenses, whether I have committed them willingly or unwillingly. Forever give me a place among all your servants, at your lotus feet, where there is no more lamentation, no more fear, no more death. Your feet are the only shelter for one like me who has found no refuge anywhere in this world. Your feet are the source of ultimate good for one like me who has found no value anywhere else in this world."

bhumau skhalita-padanam bhumir evavalambanam tvayi jataparadhanam tvam eva saranam prabho

"Those who trip and fall have only the ground as an aid to again get up. O Lord, those who commit offenses to You, have no one but You as a recourse."

So, my dear devotees, tread carefully the path of devotion. Always pray for the mercy of Krishna, the guru, and the Vaishnavas. Remember that progress in

devotion depends on progress in humility — that is the art of sadhana.

EPILOGUE

*saiveyaṁ bhuvī dhanya-gauḍa nagarī velāpi saivāmbudheḥ
so 'yaṁ śrī puruṣottamo madhu pates tāny eva nāmāni ca
no kutrāpi nirīkṣyate hari hari premotsavas tādrśo
hā caitanya kṛpā-nidhāna tava kiṁ vīkṣye punar vaibhavam*

“This is the same city of Gauḍa, blessed on earth,
this too the very same ocean beach,
this, the town of Puruṣottama (Purī)
and these, the very same Holy Names, Hare Krishna;
but, alas! Nowhere can I see the same festival of love.
Oh, Chaitanya, source of all compassion,
will I ever again see Your glories?”

(Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī’s Chaitanya-candrāmṛta, 140)

*gorāra āmi mukhe balile nā cale
gorāra ācāra gorāra pracāra laile phala phale*

“It is not enough to simply advertise repeatedly that one is a devotee of

Mahāprabhu saying, ‘I am Gaurā’s, I am Gaurā’s.’ The results of being the Lord’s follower come to one who takes up Mahāprabhu’s preaching mission as well as the practices taught by Him.” (Prema-vivarta)

Some of us affirm, with conviction, that we follow Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, have faith in Him, and are devoted to Him. When we interact with Vaishnavas from other traditions that do not have the same regard for Mahāprabhu that we do, we strongly rebuke them; and criticize them in articles and speeches.

There is indeed a general notion among ordinary people today that Mahāprabhu is accepted throughout the world and that no one truly rejects Him. However, if we look deeply we find that very few of us truly follow Mahāprabhu. In fact, fearing to be called atheists for not offering respect to the Vedic scriptures and the Supreme Lord or of being vilified by the public in general, we claim to honor Mahāprabhu, but all we are really interested in is our own prestige...

There is, these days, a class of people who, leading a reckless private life and following the partial discipline of the smārtas, act permissively and whimsically, and still dare to publicly criticize the true followers of Mahāprabhu. Dismissing Mahāprabhu’s teachings as sectarian, they neglect the standards of Vaishnava conduct and yet profess to know the Lord better than His devotees do. Thus they criticize in their publications the great personalities who have dedicated their lives to Mahāprabhu’s service, making Him the ultimate goal of their lives.

However, the honest inquirer finds that these people are affected by the disease of self-deception, of weakness of character, of dishonesty. The arrogance of these people has nothing to do with true acceptance of Mahāprabhu and His message, but is only proof of sickening attachment to personal prestige and sense gratification.

If we ask ourselves, “Are we truly following Mahāprabhu?” and then honestly seek the answer, we must first examine not only Mahāprabhu’s own teachings and conduct, but those of His personal associates, through whom the Lord spread His message. We must then ask ourselves how closely we follow those teachings, especially in times of personal difficulty or social disapproval.

Sadly, some people accept as Mahāprabhu’s teachings only those portions that are convenient to their life styles or frame of mind. Such people believe that Śrī Rūpa, Śrī Sanātana, Śrī Jīva, Krishnadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Vrindavan dāsa

Ṭhākura, and other intimate associates of the Lord profess doctrines that in reality are different from Mahāprabhu's. They even go so far as to claim that Mahāprabhu's followers are narrow-minded sectarians who have made many exaggerated claims about the Lord's person and teachings. Thus they refuse to accept the statements of Mahāprabhu's associates as authoritative. But when genuine teachers of the doctrines of Vaishnavism expose these people's mock following of Mahāprabhu, showing that, for all intents and purposes, it is actually opposition to the Lord, they become angry and verbally attack the devotees.

The foolish attitude of these people is comparable to the logic of half a hen—Mahāprabhu cannot be separated from His entourage. One cannot cut off the Lord's hands and feet and then pay respects to His head. When devotees quote the voices of authority from the disciplic succession, these self-styled followers of Mahāprabhu call it the Vaishnava sect's fanaticism and narrow-mindedness. As an example they quote the Chaitanya Bhāgavata verse in which Vrindavan dāsa Ṭhākura condemns Nityānanda Prabhu's critics:

eta parihāreo je pāpī nindā kare

tabe lāthi māroṅ tāra śirera upare

“I will take a stick and beat on the head those sinners who, ignoring everything I have said, continue to blaspheme Nityānanda Prabhu.” (Chaitanya Bhāgavata 1.9.225; 17.158; 2.11.63; 2.18.223; 2.23.522)

The self-styled followers of Mahāprabhu call these utterances of Vrindavan Dāsa Ṭhākura violent and intemperate, and proof of the fanaticism of Vaishnavas in general. Their imaginary approval of Mahāprabhu is based on a rejection of the Lord's associates which is deep rooted in malice and malevolence. They, convinced that devotion is nothing but sentimentalism and unfounded enthusiasm, consider Mahāprabhu's devotees incapable of understanding the Lord's true nature. But they believe themselves, as independent third parties, capable of such understanding. The extent of the arrogance manifest by such a claim is beyond even their own comprehension. Such is the type of person which, prominently today, propagate its ideas on the editorial pages of

newspapers and on the podiums of various public assemblies.

Illegitimate modern-day followers of Mahāprabhu also are those who make a show of accepting Mahāprabhu and His associates, but actually profess all manners of heterodox views. Like wolves in sheep's clothing, these pseudo-Vaishnavas pose as orthodox thinkers, making a hypocritical display of devotion while actually infected by caste consciousness, monism, or the so-called philosophy of synthesis (samanvaya-vāda). These characters make a show of accepting Mahāprabhu and His close associates, but protest either openly or anonymously when Mahāprabhu's surrendered devotees fearlessly preach the Lord's message as it is.

These duplicitous frauds tolerate the brow-beating of the impersonalists or the caste brahmins, but when a bonafide ācārya speaks out they are unable to tolerate it. Due to excessive sentimentalism and lust, these sahajiyās have become so inflated in their egotism that when told that Mahāprabhu's teaching and example direct one to give up bad association, they object, unwilling to give up their sensuous ways.

In the Chaitanya Charitāmṛta the story of Chota Haridāsa is told as a lesson for potentially deviant followers. Certain aspects of Chota Haridāsa's conduct were displeasing to Mahāprabhu and are to be avoided.

When Krishnadāsa Vipra was tempted away from Mahāprabhu's association by the Bhaṭṭathāri women, he too, was not acting as a branch of the Chaitanya desire tree of divine love. Giving up the direct service of the Lord to consort with these women, he was not keeping with what is expected of an eternal associate of the Lord.

When in Vraja, the Lord's companion, Balabhadra Bhaṭṭācārya, wanted to leave the service of Mahāprabhu—Krishna Himself—to see the supposed reincarnation of Krishna in Kālīya lake, his behavior was not in accordance with the true standard of an eternal companion of the Lord.

Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya supported the smārta and Māyāvāda philosophies and even refused to accept Mahāprabhu as an incarnation of Lord Krishna. His is another example of conduct uncharacteristic of the branches of the Chaitanya tree of divine love. Many such examples are found throughout the accounts of Lord Chaitanya's līlā. There is the instance of Jagāi and Mādhāi's sinful

existence and their violent behavior towards Nityānanda Prabhu and Haridāsa Ṭhākura, and their opposition to the chanting of the Holy Name. There is Gopīnātha Paṭṭanāyaka, who stole from the royal treasury. Kamalākānta Viśvāsa, Advaita Prabhu’s disciple, perceived Advaita to be in debt. Brahmānanda Bhāratī, one of the roots of the desire tree of divine love, wore a deerskin, the dress of a Māyāvādī sannyāsī, and Mahāprabhu did not approve of this and corrected him. Vallabhācārya, who is identified in the Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā as an incarnation of Śukadeva, proclaimed his own commentary on the Bhāgavatam to be superior to that of Śrīdhara Svāmī—this kind of arrogance is not characteristic of a Śukadeva.

Devānanda Pundit, also counted among the branches of the Chaitanya tree, tolerated offenses to Mahāprabhu’s dear associate, Srīvāsa Pundit; contemplated liberation; and interpreted the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam in ways that opposed its true purport of devotion to Krishna. This is certainly not befitting an eternal companion of the Lord.

Sentimentalist prākṛta-sahajiyās find it painful to hear such criticism of conduct, disapproved of by Mahāprabhu Himself. But just as a good doctor does not hide his diagnosis in order to please the patient, the devotees of the Lord do not hide the fact that progress in spiritual life is dependent on giving up attachment to bad company, sense gratification, and immediate pleasures. The devotee does not withhold good advice out of a desire to deceive and flatter. If the straightforward, direct and honest devotee says that engaging in illicit sexual activity is detrimental to spiritual life and advises one to give it up; if he tells someone overly attached to wife and children to give up that attachment, these are beneficial instructions. When spoken, the truth may cause pain, but out of kindness, the devotee would rather speak the truth than add more fuel on the fire of people’s material attachments.

We may be very vocal about following Mahāprabhu, but when He declares that the essence of Vaishnava conduct is to give up bad association (such as the company of womanizers and non-devotees) will we call Him cruel and unkind? Mahāprabhu called Choṭa Haridāsa a “monkey renunciate,” one who has given up the appearance of interest in sensual life but goes on to flirt with women and do other things contrary to the Vaishnava rules of conduct. Mahāprabhu said about Choṭa Haridāsa that the only atonement for this grievous deviation was to drown himself. Shall we then call Mahāprabhu cruel and unkind? Shall we deny that He ever said such a thing? Shall we rather try to establish that Mahāprabhu

approves of our own loose standards of worldly behavior? If we go about giving speeches in public assemblies to this end, is it not simply proof of our own dishonesty?

We may say, “I accept and follow Mahāprabhu,” but despite point-by-point evidence in Mahāprabhu’s teachings, we do not accept that the only way of attaining God is devotion characterized by chanting the Holy Names. Nor do we accept that karma, jñāna and yoga are indirect and troublesome paths full of hornets, ghosts, and poisonous snakes. Mahāprabhu and His followers sometimes called other spiritual paths “poison chalices,” or “worse than hell,” but we insist that these statements are not to be taken literally and that Mahāprabhu was making exaggerated claims in order to promote His doctrine. Is this accepting Mahāprabhu as He is? We want to fit Mahāprabhu’s doctrines into the mold of our own subjectivity. Are we then not giving more weight to our own fancies or to current public opinion than to Mahāprabhu? When we put bhakti on the same platform with jñāna or karma, are we not in effect rejecting bhakti?

Mahāprabhu used the word *saṭītvā*, or ‘wifely chastity,’ to describe the attitude of a devotee who does not mix his devotional service with jñāna or karma, or obscure his devotion with desires for sense enjoyment or gratification, all of which He compares to marital infidelity. When we say that bhakti is just one of many different ways of attaining the Supreme, we are saying, in effect, that a wife who cheats on her husband and one who is chaste and faithful are equal. No doubt those sects that promote illicit sexual activities will be glad to hear such tidings, for this liberal attitude gives their transgressions legitimacy. But normally, a respectable person objects to the idea that his chaste mother is on the same level as a prostitute. Of course, a wicked individual or a prostitute has no problem with a righteous man or a chaste woman being derided in this manner! They simply think, “Welcome to the club!”

Privately and publicly, the world has introduced infidelity as part of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu’s pure doctrines. Thus, quite naturally, many misled persons try to put their infidelity on the same level as the behavior of the chaste pure devotees of the Lord. This they call “the doctrine of synthesis.” Like an infectious disease, this philosophy has spread from a few individuals to the society at large. Is it any surprise that Māyāvāda is rapidly proliferating in the world?

So this is how we “honor” Mahāprabhu. We call our opposition to

Mahāprabhu’s doctrines “honoring” Him in order to keep up our public image.

Some of us actually believe that by making a public show of accepting Mahāprabhu we are doing Him a service rather than ourselves one: “I am a brahmin and I honor Mahāprabhu. I have studied so much and I accept Mahāprabhu. I have a big, important job and I follow Mahāprabhu. I am a rich man and I accept Mahāprabhu. So Mahāprabhu is beholden to me.”

Others say that they will boycott Mahāprabhu if He opposes their imaginary concept of what is true religion, truth, service, or welfare work, even if His devotees can show from scripture that Mahāprabhu’s position is orthodox. How can anyone claim this so-called acceptance of Mahāprabhu as authentic? Aren’t we rather accepting our own whims and preferences as our authority? The teachings of Mahāprabhu cannot be changed to suit our own whimsical ideas.

In the Chaitanya Charitāmṛta Mahāprabhu says:

harer nāma harer nāma

harer nāmaiva kevalam

kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva

nāsty eva gatih anyathā

“In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. There is no other way; there is no other way; there is no other way.” (Bṛhan-nārādīya Purana, Chaitanya Charitāmṛta 1.7.76)

Smārtas and Pañcopāsakas

In another verse of Chaitanya Charitāmṛta Mahāprabhu says:

ekale īśvara kṛṣṇa āra saba bhṛtya

jāre jaiche nācāya se taiche kare nṛtya

“Lord Krishna alone is the supreme controller, all others are His servants. As He makes people dance, so do they dance.” (Chaitanya Charitāmṛta 1.5.142)

And Mahāprabhu adds: “The goddesses Gaṅgā and Durgā are My servants. Shiva is My servant.” This is stated in the most authoritative text, the Brahma-saṁhitā:

sṛṣṭi sthiti pralaya sādhana śaktir ekā

chāyeva yasya bhuvanāni bibharti durgā

icchānurūpam api yasya ca ceṣṭate sā

govindam ādi puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi

“The external potency Maya, who is of the nature of the shadow of the cit potency, is worshiped by all people as Durgā, the creating, preserving and destroying agency of this mundane world. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda in accordance with whose will Durgā conducts herself.” (Brahma-saṁhitā 5.44)

kṣīraṁ yathā dadhi vikāra viśeṣa yogāt

sañjāyate na hi tataḥ pṛthag asti hetoḥ

yaḥ sambhutām api tathā samupaiti kāryād

govindam ādi puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi

“Just as, by the action of acids, milk is transformed into curd but yet the effect curd is neither the same as, nor different from its cause, viz., milk, so I adore the primeval Lord Govinda of whom the state of Śambhu (Shiva) is a transformation for the performance of the work of destruction.” (Brahma-saṁhitā 5.45)

*yat pāda pallava yugam vinidhāya kumbha
dvandve praṇāma samaye sa gaṇādhirājah
vighnān vihanam alam asya jagat trayasya
govindam ādi puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*

“I adore the primeval Lord Govinda, whose lotus feet are always held by Ganesh upon the tusks of his elephant head in order to obtain power for his function—destroying obstacles on the path of progress of the three worlds.”
(Brahma-saṁhitā 5.50)

*yac cakṣur eṣa savitā sakala grahāṇām
rājā samasta sura mūrtir aśeṣa tejāḥ
yasyājñayā bhramati sambhṛta kāla cakro
govindam ādi puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*

“The sun, king of all the planets, full of infinite effulgence, the image of the good soul, is as the eye of this world. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda in pursuance of whose order the sun performs his journey mounting the wheel of time.”
(Brahma-saṁhitā 5.52)

In all these verses we find endorsement of Mahāprabhu’s rejection of the smārta doctrine of Pañcopāsakas, or worship of the five deities—Shiva, Durgā, Ganesh,

Surya, and Vishnu. But despite the clear evidence from Brahma-saṁhitā quoted in Mahāprabhu’s teachings, Pañcopāsakas cling to their doctrine, arguing that the Vedas themselves authorize this process of polytheistic worship. They affirm that Mahāprabhu Himself visited the temples and holy places connected to these deities, prayed to them, and danced before them. They further argue that if Mahāprabhu did not accept a type of worship that is authorized in the Vedas, then the Vaishnava religion must be considered out of line with the Vedic literature. Indeed, some foolish deviants declare that Mahāprabhu’s religion is not Vedic.

Influenced by public opinion, we toss all these heterodox ideas about in our heads. There are indeed many names of gods in the Vedic literature, but only Vishnu is referred to as the supreme deity above all others, and independent of them. The most ancient of the Vedas, the Ṛgveda-saṁhitā, clearly states that Vishnu is superior to all gods.

agnir vai devānām adhamah

viṣṇuḥ paramah

tad-antarā hy anya-devatāḥ

“Agni is the least of the gods; Vishnu is supreme. All other gods are somewhere in between these two.”

The Bhagavad-gītā and other Vedic scriptures clearly state that the worship of any god other than the Supreme Lord is incorrect and goes against the Vedic principles. Gaurasundara may have visited numerous temples dedicated to gods and goddesses, and shown them respect, but He never considered them to be independent or supreme. Rather, He considered all the gods and goddesses to be servants of Vishnu, and therefore devotees, or Vaishnavas. In this sense only He considered them worshipable. Otherwise, according to the Pañcopāsanā understanding, the five gods are worshiped purely functionally and within the temporal world. The goal of the Pañcopāsanā is to go beyond these deities’ various forms and merge into the impersonal Brahman. At the end of the puja, the five deity forms are ultimately abandoned in the visarjana ceremony.

Mahāprabhu accepted that Vishnu and the Vaishnavas have transcendental forms of eternity, bliss, and knowledge. Shiva, Durgā, Ganesh, and Sūrya worshipped by Mahāprabhu are the order-carriers of the Supreme Lord Vishnu in His abode

of Goloka-Vaikuṅṭha. There these deities are His eternal associates, and thus never purely functional and to ever be discarded. Who then are the true followers of the Veda, the Vaishnavas or the Māyāvādīs and Pañcopāsakas? And who truly shows greater respect to the gods, the Vaishnavas or the Māyāvādīs and Pañcopāsakas who simply consider these forms imaginary and as convenient objects of worship to ultimately be discarded? Who showed greater respect to Shiva, Rāvaṇa or the Pracetas? Therefore the question: Are we truly following Mahāprabhu? Or are we following Him according to our own convenience, our own tastes and imagination?