

The Nectar of Govinda-līlā

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śrī śrī guru-gauraṅgau jayataḥ

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ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD
BHAKTIVEDĀNTA NĀRĀYAṆA
GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA



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Publisher's Note

The Path of Love

The soul's nature is to seek real freedom, to hanker for lasting pleasure. We seek satisfaction and happiness in the world around us, but our experiences over time expose the futility of such ephemeral pleasure. Enlightened souls, who are full of compassion, describe the reality of a permanent bliss based on a lasting spiritual existence. Their writings provide us with an intimate insight into reality, which is replete with variety, form, qualities and exquisite, lustrous personalities. Their writings also invite us to participate in the sweetness of ever-increasing transcendental love, or *prema*. They thus direct us to that ultimate destination, which is achieved by attaining the spiritual perfection that they themselves possess. What they describe is called the path of love, distinct among the philosophies of India as *bhakti-yoga*, or devotion to God.

The Great Master

Bhakti-yoga is the essence of the Vedas (India's vast body of ancient Sanskrit scriptures; *veda* means "knowledge"). It is the path that all paths ultimately lead to, since it reveals the topmost condition of the heart. Although *bhakti-yoga* has been practised since time immemorial, the *bhakti-yoga* movement underwent a renaissance five hundred years ago in Bengal, coinciding with Europe's own Renaissance period.

The leading figure and reformer of this *bhakti* movement was Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, also known as Mahāprabhu, 'the Great Master'. The general populace of India regard Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as a most extraordinary saint, but actually, He is an *avatāra*, an incarnation of the Lord who comes to this world with a specific mission.

He chose to incarnate as compassion personified in order to benefit the world in the troubled Age of Kali (our current epoch, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy).

According to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, worldly social distinctions are utterly irrelevant to one's eternal spiritual identity, which can easily be realized by chanting the names of God in the *mahā-mantra* – Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

The Mahā-mantra

The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa personified as sacred sound. The vibration of the *mantra* is not a material sound as it comes directly from the spiritual platform and is beyond the realm of the mind. One can chant it all day and night and never feel tired. The more one chants, the more our spiritual consciousness is revived. The *mahā-mantra* consists of three words: Hare, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma. Each word is in the vocative, a calling out to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa is the source of all spiritual potency and Śrī Rādhā is the complete embodiment of that potency. She is known as Hara (one who steals away) because She can captivate Kṛṣṇa's mind. In the vocative case, "Hara" becomes "Hare". Because He bestows bliss upon the residents of Vṛndāvana, He is referred to as Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive one. The extraordinary beauty of His transcendental form always surcharges the minds and senses of the cowherd damsels and the other residents of Vraja with ever increasing spiritual bliss. For this reason He is glorified as Rāma.

The Supreme Form of Godhead

Śrī Kṛṣṇa (God) has many forms. All of them are perfect, but the Vedic scriptures state that Śrī Kṛṣṇa's original form in Vṛndāvana is the 'most perfect'. That holy abode is fully resplendent with His sweetness, which even predominates over His divine opulence. The residents of that holy place are imbued with such elevated feelings for the Supreme Lord that their worship of Him is devoid

of the reverence normally offered to God. Those with a parental relationship with Him chastise Him, His friends defeat Him in games and order Him about, and His beloved *gopīs* sometimes become angry with Him and refuse to speak with Him. Such familiar and charming exchanges please Him unlimitedly more than exalted, reverential prayers offered by persons who do not have the same purity of love for Him.

In his preface to *Kṛṣṇa, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja states, “Kṛṣṇa is all-attractive, one should know that all his desires should be focused on Kṛṣṇa. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said that the individual person is the proprietor or master of his own body but that Kṛṣṇa, who is the Supersoul present in everyone’s heart, is the supreme proprietor and supreme master of each and every individual body. As such, if we concentrate our loving propensities upon Kṛṣṇa only, then immediately universal love, unity and tranquillity will be automatically realized. When one waters the root of a tree, he automatically waters the branches, twigs, leaves and flowers; when one supplies food to the stomach through the mouth, he satisfies all the various parts of the body.”

This book, which reveals wonderful truths about the Supreme Person, will satisfy any sincere seeker of the Truth.



About the Author

On the auspicious day of Maunī Amāvasyā, 1921, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja took his divine birth in a devout Vaiṣṇava family in Tivārīpura, in the state of Bihar, India.

In February, 1946, he met his *gurudeva*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and his life of complete and exemplary dedication to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, or the path of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* in the line of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, began.

He accompanied his *gurudeva* on his extensive preaching tours throughout India, actively assisting him in propagating the

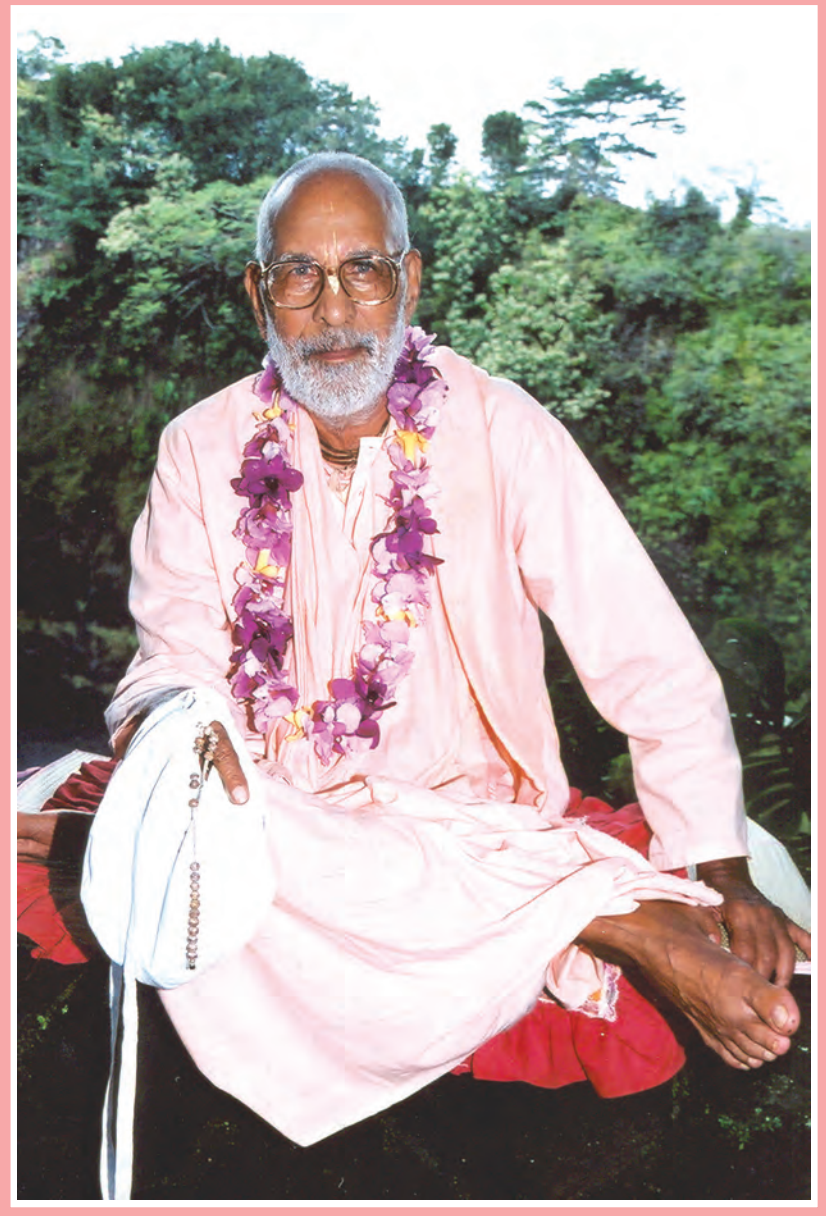
teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu for the eternal benefit of the living entities in this world. This included regularly hosting the thousands of pilgrims attending the yearly circumambulation of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma, the appearance place of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma, the appearance place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

His *gurudeva* had instructed him to translate the writings of prominent Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas into Hindi, a task he assiduously assumed throughout his entire life and which resulted in the publication of nearly fifty Hindi sacred texts. These invaluable masterpieces are currently being translated into English and other major languages of the world.

For many years, he travelled throughout India to spread the message of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, and it was for this end, also, that in 1996, he journeyed abroad. During the next fourteen years, he circled the globe more than thirty times. Whether he was in India or abroad, his preaching always bore the distinctive characteristic of boldly unmasking any misconception obscuring the specific purposes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's advent, in strict adherence to the desire of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda and in perfect congruence with the conceptions of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's foremost follower. Thus, in present times, in upholding the glorious tenets of the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, he performed the function of a true *ācārya*.



At the age of ninety years, on December 29, 2010, at Cakra-tīrtha in Śrī Jagannātha Purī-dhāma, he concluded his pastimes in this world. The following day, in Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma, Śrī Gaurasundara's fully empowered emissary, the very embodiment of His unique compassion, was given *samādhi*. He will never cease to reside in his divine instructions and in the hearts of those who are devoted to him.



nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda

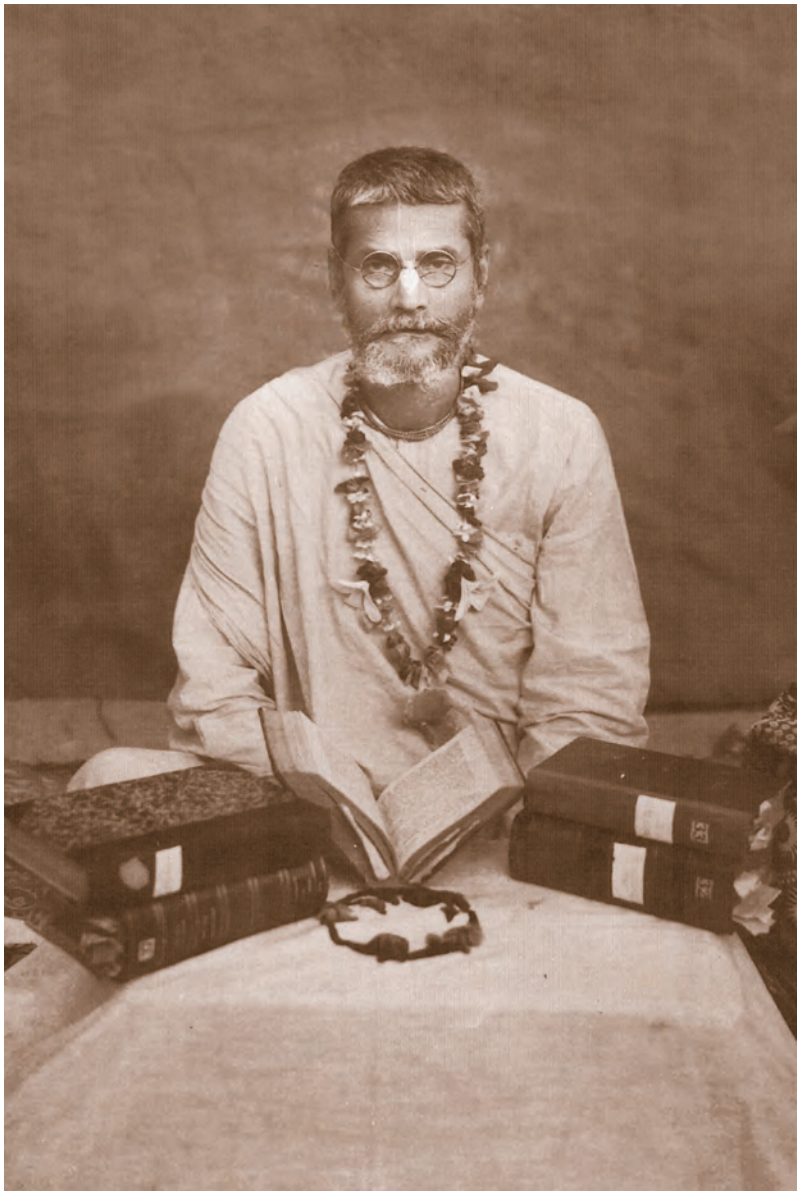
ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA NĀRĀYAṆA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA



nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA VĀMANA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

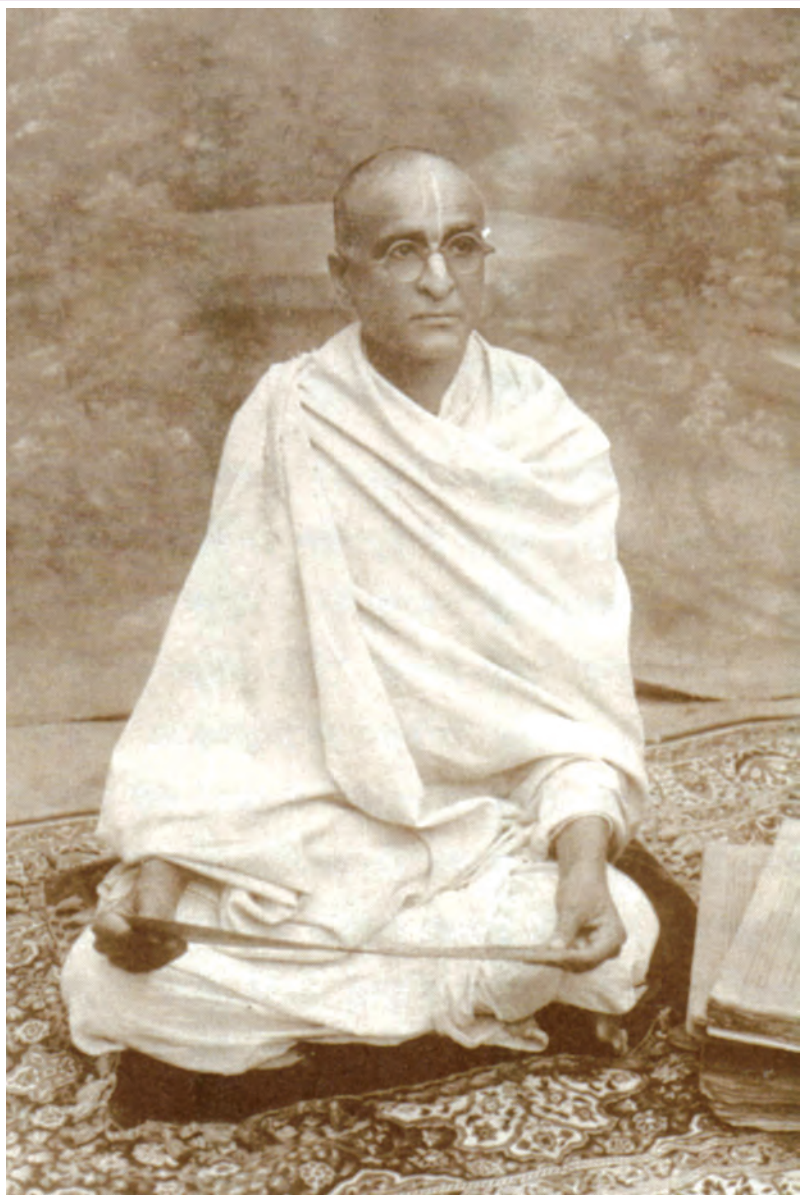


nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA SVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA



nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda

ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTI PRAJÑĀNA KEŚAVA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA



nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTISIDDHĀNTA SARASVATĪ PRABHUPĀDA



The cycle of birth and death: One who has taken birth will certainly die, and afterward he will certainly take birth again. Arjuna was crying



for everyone – for his son, wife, relatives and friends – and we are also crying like this. (Page 5)



Veṇu-gīta: Kṛṣṇa was holding the flute to His lips and playing so sweetly that it seemed the nectar of His heart was emanating through the holes of the flute and inundating the entire area of Vṛndāvana. Those eyes which have not seen this should be set on fire. Only the eyes which have seen this beautiful scene are successful. (Page 13)



Bhagavad-gītā: At first, with hands folded together, Arjuna said, “In all ways I am now surrendered unto You. As You instruct me, I will do.” (Page 18)



The birth of Pṛthu Mahārāja: Next they churned the arms of Vena's body, and from them Pṛthu Mahārāja appeared. What is the meaning of *pṛthu*? One whose fame will be spread in all directions because of his good qualities, and who can protect and nurture his subjects, is called *pṛthu*. (Page 42)



Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa surrounded by the gopīs: That which we do for ourselves is not *bhakti*. Gradually, when what we do becomes solely for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa and His associates, then only will it be *bhakti*. It must be purely for Kṛṣṇa, for Rādhā, for Their associates, and then it will be *śuddha-bhakti*. (Page 54)



Supersoul in all hearts: But Bhagavān, the Supreme Lord, is so merciful that He descends to the material realm in the form of the Supersoul (Paramātmā) and is always present in the heart of the *jīva*, or living entity, as the witness. (Page 72)

Introduction

It is with great happiness that we now present this third English edition of *The Nectar of Govinda-līlā* before our faithful readers. This material was spoken originally in Hindi in 1990–91 by one of the most prominent Vaiṣṇava teachers of the modern era, our beloved *gurudeva*, *om viṣṇupāda paramahamṣa parivrājakācārya aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja*.

A stalwart spiritual master in a disciplic succession emanating directly from the Supreme Lord Himself, Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja has been preaching the ancient science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for over fifty years. Since 1996 he has travelled extensively outside India, enlightening unlimited spiritual seekers and granting them renewed inspiration. He has published numerous literatures in both Hindi and English, but it is the quality of his spoken word that especially distinguishes him. Śrīla Gurudeva possesses a unique ability to explain the finer points of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy and a simply extraordinary ability to describe the pastimes of the Divine Couple, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. The lectures that comprise this book are a perfect illustration of these talents, and it is therefore our firm conviction that this publication will prove to be very beneficial for those sincerely desiring to make progress in their spiritual lives.

A strong determination to broadcast the ancient teachings of spiritual India in the modern world is something Śrīla Gurudeva shares in common with his dear friend and instructing spiritual master, *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda*. Śrīla Prabhupāda single-handedly and in a relatively short period of time – from his initial

arrival in the West in 1966 until his departure from this realm in 1977 – spread the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness around the entire world. His translations and writings set the standard for the literary presentation of Vaiṣṇava theology, and we sincerely pray that this volume pleases him.

Grateful acknowledgement is extended to Lavaṅga-latā dāsī for copy-editing this new edition, to Śānti dāsī and Giridhārī dāsa for proofreading the final manuscript, to Atula-kṛṣṇa dāsa and Ananta-kṛṣṇa dāsa for checking the Sanskrit, to Kṛṣṇa-prema dāsa for designing the new cover and to Subala-sakhā dāsa for providing the new photograph of Śrīla Gurudeva. On behalf of the many devotees serving in Gauḍīya Vedānta Publications, we off this publication to Śrīla Gurudeva, praying that he be pleased with our efforts.

An aspiring servant of the Vaiṣṇavas,

Prema-vilāsa dāsa

Pāpāṅkuṣa-ekādaśī

5th October, 2003

Gopīnātha-bhavana, Śrī Vṛndāvana

Maṅgalācaraṇa

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya
jñānāñjana-salākayā
cakṣur unmlitaṁ yena
tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

I offer my most humble prostrated obeisances unto the spiritual master, who has opened my eyes, which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance, with the torchlight of knowledge.

*vāñchā-kalpa-tarubhyaś ca
kṛpā-sindhubyā eva ca
patitānām pāvenebhyo
vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ*

I offer obeisances to the Vaiṣṇavas, who just like desire trees can fulfil the desires of everyone and who are full of compassion for the conditioned souls.

*namo mahā-vadānyāya
kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-
nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

I offer obeisances to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself. He has assumed the golden hue of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and is munificently distributing *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

*he kṛṣṇa karuṇā-sindho
 dīna-bandho jagat-pate
 gopeśa gopikā-kānta
 rādhā-kānta namo 'stu te*

I offer obeisances to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is an ocean of mercy, the friend of the distressed and the source of all creation. He is the master of the *gopas* and the lover of the *gopīs* headed by Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

*tapta-kāñcana-gaurāṅgi
 rādhe vṛndāvaneśvari
 vṛṣabhānu-sute devi
 praṇamāmi hari-priye*

I offer obeisances to Śrīmatī Rādhikā, whose complexion is like molten gold and who is the queen of Vṛndāvana. She is the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja and is very dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

*hā devi kāku-bhara-gadgadayādya vācā
 yāce nipatya bhuvi daṇḍavad udbhaṭārtiḥ
 asya prasādam abudhasya janasya kṛtvā
 gāndharvike nija gane gaṇanām vidhehi*

O Devī Gāndharvikā, in utter desperation I throw myself on the ground like a stick and with a choked voice humbly implore You to please be merciful to this fool and count me as one of Your own.

*aṅga-śyāmalima-cchaṭābhīr abhito mandīkṛtendīvarām
 jādyaṁ jāguḍa-rociṣāṁ vidadhataṁ paṭṭāmbarasya śrīyā
 vṛndāranya-nivāsinaṁ hṛdi lasad-dāmābhīr āmodaram
 rādhā-skandha-niveśitojjvala-bhujāṁ dhyāyema dāmodaram*

Whose dark bodily lustre is millions of times more beautiful than the blue lotus flower, whose refulgent yellow garments rebuke the radiance of golden *kunkuma*, whose residence is Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma, whose chest is beautified by a swinging *vaijayantī* garland and whose splendid left hand rests upon the right shoulder of Śrīmatī Rādhikā – I meditate upon that Śrī Dāmodara.

*bhaktyā vihīnā aparādha-lakṣyaḥ
kṣiptās ca kāmādi-taraṅga-madhye
kṛpā-mayī tvāṁ śaraṇaṁ prapaṇnā
vṛnde numaste caraṇāravindam*

Devoid of devotion and guilty of committing unlimited offences, I am being tossed about in the ocean of material existence by the turbulent waves of lust, anger, greed and so forth. Therefore, O merciful Vṛndā-devī, I take shelter of you and offer obeisances unto your lotus feet.

*gurave gauracandrāya
rādhikāyai tad-ālaye
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-bhaktāya
tad-bhaktāya namo namaḥ*

I offer obeisances to the spiritual master, to Śrī Gauracandra, to Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her associates, to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, and to all Vaiṣṇavas.

*vairāgya-yug-bhakti-rasaṁ prayatnair
apāyayan mām anabhīpsum andham
kṛpāmbhudhir yaḥ para-duḥkha-duḥkhi
sanātanaṁ taṁ prabhum āśrayāmi*

I was unwilling to drink the nectar of *bhakti* possessed of renunciation, but Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, being an ocean of mercy who cannot tolerate the sufferings of others, made me drink it. Therefore I take shelter of him as my master.

śrī-caitanya-mano-'bhīṣṭam
sthāpitaṁ yena bhūtale
svayaṁ rūpaḥ kadā mahyaṁ
dadāti sva-padāntikam

When will Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, who has established the mission in this world that fulfils the internal desire of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, give me shelter at his lotus feet?

yaṁ pravrajantam anupetaṁ apeta-kṛtyaṁ
dvaipāyano viraha-kātara ājuhāva
putreti tan-mayatayā taravo 'bhinedus
taṁ sarva-bhūta-hṛdayaṁ munim ānato 'smi

I offer obeisances to Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who can enter the hearts of all living entities. When he left home without undergoing the purificatory processes such as accepting the sacred thread, his father Vyāsa cried out, “Oh my son!” As if they were absorbed in that same feeling of separation, only the trees echoed in response to his call.

tavaivāsmi tavaivāsmi
na jīvāmi tvayā vinā
iti vijñāya devī tvam
naya mām caraṇāntikam

I am Yours! I am Yours! I cannot live without You! O Devī (Rādhā), please understand this and bring me to Your feet.

The Nectar of Govinda-līlā

Chapter One

man-manā bhava

Always Think of Me

Recently, by the desire of Bhagavān, we had to leave the holy land of Vṛndāvana for some time, but wherever we go, we always remember Vṛndāvana. The scriptures describe many spiritual places, but in the entire universe there is no place like Vṛndāvana. He who knows the glories of Vṛndāvana will understand this, and especially one who has received the mercy of Vṛndāvana will understand this. In his *Śrī Vṛndāvana-mahimāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī has written that Vṛndāvana is our everything, and not just the village of Vṛndāvana, but the entire Vraja-maṇḍala. Especially Nandagrāma, Varṣāṇā, Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Śyāma-kuṇḍa, Girirāja-Govardhana: they are all included within Vṛndāvana. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His eternal associates have performed pastimes there that are thoroughly unique.

For understanding these things, the instructions of *Bhagavad-gītā* serve as a foundation. Constructed upon this foundation is the palace of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with its twelve floors. There are nine storeys or cantos lower, two storeys or cantos above, and in the middle is the tenth storey, or the Tenth Canto. Inside this there are ninety different *kuñjas*, which are the chapters of the Tenth Canto. And in the centre of this are five special chambers, which are the five chapters describing the *rāsa* dance, where Śrī

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are enjoying amorous pastimes. It appears that Rādhikā is serving Kṛṣṇa, but really Kṛṣṇa is serving Her. As long as the foundation of the instructions of *Bhagavad-gītā* is not there, we will take a mundane understanding of these topics and everything will be ruined.

In the *Gītā* (18.65) we find this verse:

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto
mad-yājī mām namaskuru
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te
pratijāne priyo 'si me*

Absorb your mind and heart in Me, become My devotee, worship Me, offer your obeisances to Me, and then certainly you will come to Me. I make this promise to you because you are very dear to Me.

This is the best of all verses in *Bhagavad-gītā*. We shouldn't consider the following verse (18.66) to be the best:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

Give up all forms of religiosity – worldly or other-worldly, bodily or mental, *varṇāśrama-dharma*, the worship of demigods and goddesses, and even the worship of Nārāyaṇa and Dvārakādhīśa – and come exclusively to My shelter.

Although this is the final verse, and Kṛṣṇa is telling us to abandon our *dharma*, we may think that some sinful reaction may come to us. But Kṛṣṇa says, “I am responsible for that. I will excuse you from all sins.” Making our parents cry, making our brothers and relatives cry, a wife making her husband cry, a husband making his wife cry, not doing our duty to society, and not following *varṇāśrama-dharma* is all *adharmā*, irreligious, and sinful reaction will come to anyone who does these things. But

Kṛṣṇa says, “I promise that I will at once free you from any sinful reaction.”

The verse that we will describe here, “*man-manā bhava...*”, is even better than this verse. The verse “*sarva-dharmān parityajya...*” gives instruction for *śaraṇāgati*, devotional surrender, but this verse gives the fruit of that surrender, and is therefore even more exalted.

When we read the *Gītā* thoroughly, and especially when we look through the commentaries of our *ācāryas*, we see that there are five levels of instructions in *Bhagavad-gītā*. First, there are general instructions for everyone. After this is secret (*guhya*), then more secret (*guhyatara*), then most secret (*guhyatama*), and finally the most secret of all secrets (*sarva-guhyatama*). These instructions are not given in an expanded form, but in the form of condensed verses (*sūtras*).

*sarvopaniṣado gāvo
dogdhā gopāla-nandanah
pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīr bhoktā
dugdham gītāmṛtaṁ mahat*

Bhagavad-gītā-māhātmyam (5)

All the scriptures – the Vedas, Purāṇas, Upaniṣads – are like a cow, and Arjuna is the calf. First the cow feeds a little milk to her calf, and she becomes pacified by that. Then the milkman Śrī Kṛṣṇa can milk the cow, and keep the remainder of the milk aside. Who is the remainder for? Those that are *sudhī*, whose intelligence is pure. Whose intelligence is pure? The great scientists and scholars of this world? The *Bhāgavatam* doesn’t say this. It gives the word *sumedhaḥ*, and who is *sumedhaḥ*? A person who performs *bhagavad-bhajana*, worship of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and who is *rasika*, expert in relishing the liquid mellows of devotion to the Lord (*rasa*). One who has decided that engaging

in *bhagavad-bhajana* is the essence of life is purely intelligent, and the rest are fools.

How are they fools? *Go-kharah* – amongst the animals, the fool is the donkey. When we were coming from Delhi recently, we saw a dog seated on top of a donkey, just looking around. The donkey was just going on its way in a relaxed fashion. Therefore the donkey is a big fool. People load all of their rubbish and heavy things on the donkey, and it carries them. It doesn't do any work with its front feet, but does everything with its hind legs, such as when it wants to kick someone. If you tell it to go forward it goes backward, and if you tell it to go backward it goes forward. Such a fool it is, and similarly those that don't perform *bhajana* of Bhagavān are also fools. And who is intelligent? Only those who engage in *bhagavad-bhajana*.

After the cow has first fed her calf a little milk, Kṛṣṇa keeps the remainder in a pot for those that are *sudhī*, of pure intelligence, who are dear to Him. Up to here the milk is the instructions of the *Gītā*, but there is something more: on top of the milk will be the essence, the cream. Churn that, and very soft and beautiful butter will also be produced. Along with the butter also come some things to be discarded. Put the butter on the fire, and in the end, what will we save? Clarified butter, ghee. From ghee we cannot make another thing; it is the essence.

Vyāsa gave Śukadeva the cream and told him, “My son, churn it.” Śukadeva took a churning stick and slowly churned until butter was produced. He distributed this butter in the form of the first nine cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but some people said, “We will not take butter; we will accept only the essence of butter.”

So to them he gave the remainder of the *Bhāgavatam*, and therefore the remainder of the *Bhāgavatam* is so much greater.

What he gave in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is apparently nowhere in the Vedas and Upaniṣads, but actually it *is* there. In what form is it there? Just as there is ghee spread throughout milk, this essence is in the *Gītā*, Upaniṣads, Vedas, Purāṇas and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But taking this milk and then making butter and ultimately ghee is not an ordinary task. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the five chapters describing the *rāsa-līlā*, the *Gopī-gītā*, the *Bhramara-gītā* (where Rādhā is speaking to a bumblebee in the madness of separation from Kṛṣṇa) and the *Uddhava-sandēśa* (where Kṛṣṇa sends Uddhava to Vṛndāvana with a message for the *gopīs*) are the beautiful ghee that he made. And to whom in this world did he give it? He didn't give it to unqualified people, but exclusively to those who were qualified.

For ordinary people, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said:

*yuktāhāra-vihārasya
yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu
yukta-svapnāvabodhasya
yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā*

Bhagavad-gītā (6.17)

Don't eat or sleep too much, and be regulated in working and recreation, otherwise you will not be able to attain that rare *yoga* wherein a soul meets his Creator. In this general knowledge, He has given the knowledge that we are not these bodies. Be detached from the desires of the body and don't act for them.

*jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur
dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca*

Bhagavad-gītā (2.27)

One who has taken birth will certainly die, and afterwards he will certainly take birth again. Arjuna was crying for everyone – for his son, wife, relatives, friends – and we are also crying for this.

*aśocyān anvaśocas tvaṁ
 prajñā-vādānīs ca bhāṣase
 gatāsūn agatāsūnīs ca
 nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ*

Bhagavad-gītā (2.11)

Those who are wise despair neither for the living nor the dead. Everyone will die, and those that don't go today will go tomorrow or the next day. Don't cry or worry for them, because inside the body is the soul.

*nainam chindanti śāstrāṇi
 nainam dahati pāvakaḥ
 na cainam kledayanty āpo
 na śoṣayati mārutaḥ*

Bhagavad-gītā (2.23)

The soul cannot be harmed by any weapon, burnt by fire, moistened by water or withered by the wind. The soul is eternal, but the body is subject to death, so don't be overly concerned about the body.

Yes, a man can worry for it like this: after becoming enlightened, and realising that Bhagavān has given this body in the form of a temple and for the purpose of performing *bhajana*, it should be cared for. We should keep it clean and repair it, because otherwise we won't be able to do *bhajana*. Up to here, caring for the body is all right, but it should be done with a spirit of detachment. In the end Bhagavān will ask for it back, and it must be returned. He will ask, "I have given you such a rare and valuable human form, and what have you done with it?"

Therefore He has spoken verses like this:

*yā niśā sarva-bhūtānām
 tasyām jāgarti saṁnyamī
 yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni
 sā niśā paśyato muneh*

Bhagavad-gītā (2.69)

While ordinary people sleep, the sage is awake in self-realisation, and while the sage sleeps, ordinary people are awake in sense gratification. Therefore you should simply engage in *bhagavad-bhajana* and, considering happiness and distress to be the same, go on doing your duty. Up to here it is general instruction.

After this comes *guhya*, secret instruction, which is *brahma-jñāna*. The soul (*ātmā*) is *brahma*, spiritual by nature.

*sthita-prajñasya kā bhāṣā
 samādhi-sthasya keśava
 sthita-dhīḥ kiṁ prabhāseta
 kim āsīta vrajeta kim*

Bhagavad-gītā (2.54)

Arjuna asks, “What are the symptoms of a person whose consciousness is absorbed in spirituality? How does he speak, how does he sit and how does he walk?”

In the eighteenth chapter the conclusion is given:

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā
 na śocati na kāṅkṣati
 samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
 mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām*

Bhagavad-gītā (18.54)

One who is situated in Brahman sees spirituality everywhere, and he thinks, “I am also Brahman.” Thinking such he will meditate on Brahman, and will not experience happiness or distress. He remains steady through whatever comes to him, and merges his consciousness in Brahman.

*karmaṇy evādhikāras te
mā phaleṣu kadācana*

Bhagavad-gītā (2.47)

Go on doing your duty and don't desire the fruits of your labour. In an ordinary way, this is *brahma-jñāna*.

After this comes *guhyatara*, more secret, which is *paramātmajñāna*, knowledge of the Supersoul. There are two classes of beings, fallible (*kṣara*) and infallible (*akṣara*), and then there is Puruṣottama. Bhagavān is Puruṣottama, who resides in the hearts of all living entities in the size of a thumb. Meditate on Him, and if you don't reach Him, try again. Again not reaching Him, try again.

*kleśo 'dhikataras teṣāṃ
avyaktāsakta-cetasāṃ*

Bhagavad-gītā (12.5)

That formless Brahman that I mentioned to you before – don't go there! Beware! There will be more difficulty in trying to attach your consciousness to something formless. Instead, meditate on the Paramātmā within the heart, and one who connects with Him is a real *sannyāsī* and a real *yogī*.

*sa sannyāsī ca yogī ca
na niragnir na cākriyaḥ*

Bhagavad-gītā (6.1)

One does not become a real *sannyāsī* just by performing fire sacrifices, or by muttering “*aham brahmāsmi*”. This is all *guhyatara*, more secret.

And *guhyatama*, most secret, is given in the ninth chapter. Pure *bhakti* is given there, but it is devoid of *rasa*. Although it is pure *bhakti*, it is not full of *rasa*.

At the end of the eighteenth chapter *sarva-guhyatama*, the most

secret of all secrets, is given. It is full of *rasa*, and is the highest limit of *bhakti*:

*sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ
 śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ
 iṣṭo 'si me dṛḍham iti
 tato vakyāmi te hitam
 man-manā bhava mad-bhakto
 mad-yājī māṁ namaskuru
 mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te
 pratijāne priyo 'si me*

Bhagavad-gītā (18.64–5)

“Because you are very dear to Me, I am telling you this most hidden of all instructions.” What is that instruction? Before this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had explained up to the worship of Nārāyaṇa, which is worship of Bhagavān but with awareness of His opulences. However, in this verse, four extraordinary activities are described. The first is *man-manā bhava*, always think of Me; the second is *mad-bhakto*, become My devotee; the third is *mad-yājī*, worship Me; and the fourth is *mām namaskuru*, offer obeisances to Me. If you cannot do the first, then do the second. If you can’t do that, then do the third. If you can’t do that, then just offer obeisances, and everything will come from that.

Now we will speak on the first part of this verse: “*man-manā bhava* – absorb your mind and heart in Me.” This is not a simple thing. For a man to absorb his mind in any one activity, then his eyes, ears, nose and all his senses must be completely centred on that. If the mind cannot concentrate on something, it is more or less uncontrolled. Sometimes our mind is pondering sense enjoyment, and sometimes we think about Kṛṣṇa. This is the conditioned state. But if someone’s mind is fully absorbed in the lotus feet of Bhagavān, then that is the highest form of worship. When

will this be possible? In the beginning stage of *śraddhā*, faith, it is not possible. Then the stage of *ruci*, taste, will come, and still it won't be possible. After this we can really begin to give our heart. In the stage of *āsakti*, spiritual attachment, we can give perhaps one-half of our heart to Him. In the stage of *bhāva*, devotional ecstasy, maybe we can give three-quarters of our heart to Him, but only in the stage of *prema*, divine love, can we fully give our hearts to Kṛṣṇa.

Therefore, when Kṛṣṇa was sending Uddhava to the *gopīs* in Vṛndāvana, in a clever way, not straight but crookedly, He told Uddhava, “Uddhava, My mother and My father are very upset for Me. You go and give them My message and console them a little.”

Uddhava waited there for a moment and then said, “Is there anything more?”

Kṛṣṇa thought, “What will I tell him and not tell him?” He became a little worried. After deliberating, He concluded, “If I don't tell him now, when will I tell him?”

He said, “Yes, there is one thing. There in Vṛndāvana are the *gopīs*, who are the most dear to Me. They have given Me their entire hearts, and besides Me they know nothing. For Me they have forgotten all of their bodily needs and bodily functions. What is the condition of someone who has forgotten all bodily needs? They have forgotten eating and drinking, bathing and decorating themselves with ornaments and clothing, and fixing their hair. Their bodies will certainly have become thin and weak, and just see how for Me they have forgotten all of their bodily relations: husbands, sons, friends, brothers, wealth and property. They have no love for anyone but Me, and day and night they are deeply remembering Me. Uddhava, in this world you have not seen such an example of how one person can give their heart to another. Somehow or other they are holding onto their lives.

Their life-airs have risen up to their necks, and how much longer can they live like this? I don't know if they can be saved or not. Therefore go quickly, and save their lives. Go and give them My message, that I am definitely coming tomorrow or the next day. For this they are holding onto their lives. They will think, 'Kṛṣṇa has said that He is coming, and He is incapable of telling a lie.' Clutching onto this hope, it is as if their lives are hanging on a limb. If the limb breaks, they will fall, meaning they will give up their lives. So go quickly."

Therefore the *gopīs* are the perfect example of *man-manā bhava*. Now listen to an example of how Kṛṣṇa takes someone's heart. We understand that giving our heart to someone is very difficult, but if instead someone takes our heart, then it becomes very easy. Otherwise we are simply unable to give our hearts. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (1.2.23) it says:

*nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena
yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa will select a heart that is dear to Him and then say, "Come, I will take your heart." Even if we really desire to give Him our heart, it is very difficult, but if He desires to take our heart, then it is possible. But we must make our heart such that when Kṛṣṇa sees us it will inspire greed within Him. The heart must be pure in all ways; if there is any impurity remaining there, He will not take it. But mere purity is also not sufficient; the hearts of so many *jñānīs* are also pure. We must add some special fragrance that, reaching Kṛṣṇa's nose, will attract Him. *Bhakti-rasa* should be flowing in the heart. How does Kṛṣṇa take a heart? The following story will show how.

Kṛṣṇa was taking the cows out to graze for the day in the forests of Vṛndāvana. His bodily complexion was the colour of

a dark raincloud, His curly black hair was dangling on His face, and He appeared very, very beautiful and charming. His friends were spread out in the four directions chanting “*Sādhū! Sādhū!*” (meaning “Excellent! Excellent!”) and praising Kṛṣṇa, and singing and playing their flutes and horns. As they were going along like this, even the blind people of Vraja would come out to try and see. One would say, “Where are you going?”

Someone would reply, “I am going to have *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Take my hand, let’s go!” and with great eagerness they would go.

All the people of Vraja surrounded the road to see Kṛṣṇa taking the cows out to graze. Mother Yaśodā and Nanda Bābā were following behind Kṛṣṇa, saying, “My son, come back soon, don’t go too far away!” Time and again Kṛṣṇa told them to return, and finally, when He promised that He would certainly return later in the day, they slowly went back to their home.

There were so many newly married girls there who had just arrived in Vraja to live in the homes of their new husbands. They all went to the doors of their homes to catch a glimpse of Kṛṣṇa. Some were even peering through vents, some climbed up on their roofs, and others climbed to the tops of trees in the *kuñjas*.

Kṛṣṇa was also searching: He always wants to see new girls. In one house, there was a new girl who had just been married two or three days before. She had heard a long time before how marvellously beautiful Kṛṣṇa appears when He is taking the cows out to graze. When she heard Kṛṣṇa coming with the cows, in her heart she became very restless and eager to have His *darśana*. But her new mother-in-law and sister-in-law were sitting outside the door, and her sister-in-law was especially nasty towards her. They were both telling her, “You are not going! We are going, but you cannot. There is a black snake out there, and if it bites you, you

will never be able to remove its poison. Therefore stay in the house! We will be back soon.”

The girl said, “Where are you going? And I will just sit here in the house? I will also go!”

“No, it’s dangerous – don’t go! Your heart is very immature, and you will never be able to remove the snake’s poison. You just sit there.”

“Still I will go with you!”

“No, it’s dangerous! You won’t go.”

“Then I will go alone. All the wives, elderly people, boys, girls, birds, beasts and insects of Vraja are going for *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa, and in Vṛndāvana I alone will not receive His *darśana*? Certainly I will go!”

“No, you won’t!”

“I am certainly going! Even if you throw me out of this household I will go!”

Then, seeing that Kṛṣṇa was coming near, the mother-in-law and sister-in-law quickly ran to see. When they left, the girl stepped forward and began peering out through the crack in the door. Her position was such that she could see out, but no one could see her. Kṛṣṇa was holding the flute to His lips and playing so sweetly that it seemed the nectar of His heart was emanating through the holes of the flute and inundating the entire area of Vṛndāvana. Those eyes which have not seen this should be set on fire. Only the eyes which have seen this beautiful scene are successful. The *gopīs* were offering *ārati* to Kṛṣṇa not with lamps, but with their eyes. How? Their eyes were like lamps, and the *prema* in their hearts was like the oil. Their eyes were burning as they circled Kṛṣṇa’s form with loving sidelong glances, and they performed *arcana* of Kṛṣṇa with these glances. With great happiness, Kṛṣṇa became shy and accepted all of them.

But He was looking in the direction of that one door. Kṛṣṇa may or may not want to see someone, but if someone really wants to see Him, He will certainly see that person. That day He wanted to see that new girl first of all. He wanted to leave everyone else behind and go there immediately, so just then He played a trick with a calf. Grabbing the tail of the calf, He gave it a twist, and the calf ran directly to that door, as if it had been trained for that very purpose. At once Kṛṣṇa and the calf arrived at that door. Standing in His threefold-bending posture, with the flute to His lips, and smiling, He gave His *darsana* to that girl. Finished! Her very heart came out from her and He took it and went on His way. She could only stand motionlessly. This is taking a heart: *man-manā bhava*.

If someone attains the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, then certainly He will take their heart. If we are especially eager, wondering in our minds, “When will I be able to see the beautiful form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa?” then Kṛṣṇa will be so pleased and come and take our hearts. That girl had performed austerities for millions of years for this opportunity, and that day she became completely successful.

She was left standing motionlessly, and fifteen or twenty minutes passed. Kṛṣṇa had left and entered the forest, and the dust raised by the cows and boys had long settled. She was still standing motionlessly because without her heart or mind, she was helpless. Then the cruel sister-in-law said to her, “The black snake Śyāmasundara has bitten you, and now you will never be able to remove the poison!”

Shaking the girl, somehow she managed to bring her inside the house. “Here! Take this churning stick and churn some yoghurt. By doing some hard work your mind will return to you.” But the girl took the wrong pot, and instead began churning mustard seeds, and it made a terrible noise. Sometimes she would churn,

and sometimes she would stop. Where was her mind and heart? Kṛṣṇa had taken them: *man-manā bhava*.

Again the sister-in-law came, and she said, “Hey! What are you doing? I will go and complain to my mother about you!” At once the mother-in-law came and said, “Lift up this pot. Go and bring water.” They placed a large pot on her head, and on top of that a smaller pot. They also gave her a small child and said, “Look after this child and see that he doesn’t cry!” They put a long rope in her hand to lower the pots down into the well, and sent her off.

Like this she went. Arriving at the well, she made a noose for lowering the pot down into the well. But instead of wrapping the noose around the pot, she put it around the child as if she was going to lower *him* into the well! Everyone nearby shouted, “Hey! What are you doing?” They came running over, and taking the rope from her hands, saved the child. One *gopī* said, “It appears that a ghost has possessed her!”

Another *gopī*, who knew everything, said, “It wasn’t just an ordinary ghost, it was the ghost of Nanda!”

Vṛndāvana is the place for those who are unable to give their hearts to their children and family. They leave everyone crying for them and like refugees come to Vṛndāvana and cry exclusively for Kṛṣṇa. Even very fine sons and daughters of kings come to Vṛndāvana, give their hearts to Kṛṣṇa and engage in *bhajana*.

Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, “This is *man-manā bhava*. Absorb your mind in Me as the *gopīs* did.”

Arjuna replied, “My Lord, this is a battlefield! How is it possible for me to give my heart here? You have told me to fight against Grandfather Bhīṣma, Droṇācārya and Karṇa. I am unable to do it.”

Next He will explain “*mad-bhakto* – become My devotee.”

Chapter Two

mad-bhakto

Become My Devotee

In the last chapter we began explaining the best and *sarvaguhyatama*, most secret, verse of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Giving examples, we explained what is *man-manā bhava*. Just as Kṛṣṇa gave this instruction to Arjuna on a battlefield, we are also in the midst of a battle. We are at war with the tendencies of the mind, which is restless by nature. At that time in Kurukṣetra, there was a war going on between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. Just as this *man-manā bhava* was difficult for Arjuna then, it is also difficult for us now.

The Pāṇḍavas' army consisted of seven military phalanxes (*akṣauhiniṣ*), and the Kauravas' army consisted of eleven. Opposite us also is an army of eleven *akṣauhiniṣ*, and we are alone. Kṛṣṇa was the driver of Arjuna's chariot, but our driver is bad intelligence, deformed intelligence. Arjuna had a chariot given to him by the demigod Agni that could not be burnt or destroyed, but what kind of chariot do we have? Only the material body, which is subject to disease and death. Arjuna had the Gāṇḍīva bow for fighting, but what do we have? We have no help; such is our position of weakness. Who was sitting on the flag of his chariot? Hanumān. Arjuna had all kinds of help, but at once his mind

became disturbed and he said, “My Lord, I am unable to do this *man-manā bhava*.”

The body is our chariot, the soul is its passenger and the mind is its charioteer. What is the nature of the mind? Restless; it gives us no help at all. By its direction we will fall down or stray from the path.

At first, with hands folded together, Arjuna said:

śiṣyas te 'haṁ sādhi mām tvām prapannam

Bhagavad-gītā (2.7)

In all ways I am now surrendered unto You. As You instruct me, I will do.

He heard all of Kṛṣṇa's instructions, and then said, “I am unable to do this *man-manā bhava*. How will I absorb my mind in this way? It is not possible. Opposite us are Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana. So many great *mahārathīs* are assembled together to fight against us.”

Opposite us also are six *mahārathīs*. What are they? The urges of speech, the tongue, the stomach, the genitals, the uncontrolled mind and anger. We cannot conquer even one of these *mahārathīs*. Even such exalted personalities as Viśvāmitra and Nārada were affected by one of these *mahārathīs*, the sexual urge. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is described that once Nārada desired to marry a princess, but he was defeated at a marriage ceremony (*svayamvara*) when Viṣṇu gave him the face of a monkey. Beyond these *mahārathīs*, there are so many kinds of *anartha*, impediment, we must contend with. Therefore Kṛṣṇa said, “*Mad-bhaktō* – become My devotee.”

Arjuna considered, and said, “Saying one will become a devotee is easy, but to actually do it is very difficult.”

To become a devotee, one thing is especially necessary:

*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-
śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.1.11)

One should not have any type of material desire. For attaining *bhakti*, for attaining the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa or a real devotee, there cannot be a scent of any other desire in the heart. What to speak of the desire itself, there cannot be even a scent of it. There are to be no tendencies of *jñāna*, the cultivation of knowledge directed towards impersonal liberation, or *karma*, fruitive activity.

Without *karma* – meaning here activity in the general sense – no man can live. He must at least do some *karma*. Even at the time of sleeping we are doing some *karma*. What are we doing? Breathing, changing position and dreaming: this is all *karma*. So it is unavoidable – without doing some form of *karma* we cannot live for even one moment. Anyone who says that he is living entirely without *karma* is a pretender. We must do some *karma*. We must eat, and to save ourselves from the cold we must wear clothing. But how will we escape from *karma* covering our *bhakti*? This action will not cover *bhakti*: when eating, don't forget Bhagavān. Eat for Bhagavān, for His service. In our present condition we also cannot live without *jñāna*. Knowledge is also necessary. Without knowledge we will not even know where to place our feet while walking and we will fall.

But see how these things can cover *bhakti*. In the name of helping others, Bhārata Mahārāja made a mistake and fell down from spiritual life. He had been practising *bhakti* and attained a very high stage, up to *bhāva*. He saved the baby deer from the mouth of the tiger and from drowning in the stream, and afterwards he maintained it by feeding it milk, thinking he was

benefiting another living entity. But because of this activity he had to take another three births.

Therefore although *jñāna* and *karma* will remain, they must be kept in a position of servitude to *bhakti*. Otherwise our *bhakti* will become covered. So how will we engage our *jñāna* and *karma*? By going to the market and bringing good quality fruits and vegetables for the service of the deities. The deities will accept the offerings and give *prasāda* to everyone. By this, *bhakti* will not be covered; instead it will increase.

On the other hand, we may bring all first-class ingredients like the best carrots, pure cow's ghee and coconut, make very beautiful *halavā*, and then add silver topping. But if it is for our own enjoyment, then everything is spoiled. This action will cover our *bhakti*, so we must be careful of this.

If we have made this preparation thinking, "I have made this, I brought the ingredients, I collected the necessary funds and I will enjoy it," and afterwards offer it to Bhagavān, then that is somewhat all right, but it is not completely correct. Do not offer it only after preparing it, but rather from the very beginning it should be offered to Bhagavān.

yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra

Bhagavad-gītā (3.9)

Your action should be a sacrifice for Bhagavān. This is the instruction of *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.27) – whatever you eat or drink should be for sacrifice.

yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi

yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat

yat tapasyasi kaunteya

tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam

Whatever you eat, if you prepare food, if you perform a sacrifice, if you are keeping a garden – all should be for offering to the deity. In general the spiritually inclined people of this world are

going on like this. But Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Gauḍīya *ācāryas* have taught, “Don’t do things in this way! Beware! You’ll be trapped!” Rather we should first offer our very selves to the deity: “I am Yours.” Then whatever we eat or do will automatically be for Bhagavān.

*śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ
smaraṇam pāda-sevanam
arcanam vandanam dāsyam
sakhyam ātma-nivedanam
iti puṁsārpitā viṣṇau
bhaktiś cen nava-lakṣaṇā
kriyeta bhagavaty addhā
tan manye ’dhītam uttamam*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.5.23–4)

Hearing (*śravaṇam*) and chanting (*kīrtanam*) about Kṛṣṇa, remembering Him (*viṣṇu-smaraṇam*), serving His feet (*pāda-sevanam*), worshipping Him (*arcanam*), praying to Him (*vandanam*), becoming His servant (*dāsyam*), becoming His dear friend (*sakhyam*) and fully surrendering to Him (*ātma-nivedanam*): this is ninefold *bhakti*. Performing these nine types of devotion is the topmost knowledge.

Even if all of these are performed, but the results are offered to Bhagavān afterwards, then it is devotion mixed with personal desire (*karma-miśra-bhakti*), not pure *bhakti*. The people of this world generally don’t know this. They just think that they should offer things to Him, but pure devotees understand the shortcomings in this. Therefore we should first offer our very selves, not just the results of our activities; those who follow the path of *karma* offer that.

It is like a small boy who is eating while sitting in the lap of his father. When the boy sees something, he just puts it into his mouth, and he puts food into the mouth of his father also, and

his father is not offended. The father is pleased. Why? The boy is fully dependent on him. He may even punish the boy, but the boy would never leave him. In order to develop a relationship like this with Bhagavān, we first offer everything to our *guru*, because in our present condition he is to be seen as Bhagavān. When we develop a direct relationship with Bhagavān, then there will be no necessity of formal offerings. The *gopīs* are eating and decorating themselves, but they do not make any formal offerings or perform *pūjā* to Kṛṣṇa. They are using many good-quality things in the course of dressing and decorating themselves and applying their ornaments – but who is it all for? Whatever they do is for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. As soon as something comes to them, it is automatically for Kṛṣṇa. In this way we should do everything exclusively for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa.

Such *bhakti* is difficult to attain, and it requires that we have some merit from our previous lives. And if in this birth, by the mercy of Bhagavān and the Vaiṣṇavas, we have been graced with the company of pure Vaiṣṇavas, then pure *bhakti* can come. The story of Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura nicely illustrates this point. Although he had some merit from his previous lives, some specific desires for enjoyment still remained in his heart. He kept company with the prostitute Cintāmaṇi, who after some time became exclusively interested in Kṛṣṇa and therefore rejected Bilvamaṅgala. After this he crossed the river to her palace using a dead body for flotation, and used a snake to climb up to her window. She rebuked him, and after that he became renounced. Now having a great desire to meet Kṛṣṇa, he left his home and began heading towards Vṛndāvana. Perhaps five days later he stopped at a well to get some water where he saw a young girl, who gave him some water to drink. But he forgot about drinking the water and began gazing at her. He followed her home, and

there a *brāhmaṇa* came to the door thinking, “Why has this *mahātmā* come?”

Bilvamaṅgala asked, “Who is the girl that lives here?”

The *brāhmaṇa* replied, “She is my wife.”

Bilvamaṅgala said, “Call her. I want to speak with her a little.”

So he called her, and when she came, Bilvamaṅgala asked her, “Please give me both of your hairpins.”

The *brāhmaṇa* and his wife thought, “He is a travelling mendicant, so perhaps he has a thorn or splinter in his skin that he wants to remove.”

So they gave him the hairpins. Bilvamaṅgala *did* have a thorn he wanted to remove, but that thorn was in his heart, and he was unable to reach it. Therefore he took the hairpins and plucked out his eyes.

There is a saying in Hindi that means, “If there is no bamboo, there will be no flute.” These eyes can be the root cause of our attachment to this world insofar as the form of a woman attracts a man, and the form of a man attracts a woman, and for each other they are the personification of *māyā*, illusion. Therefore *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures have warned us to be very careful about this.

Now blind, Bilvamaṅgala went on his way. He was in such a mood of deep separation from Kṛṣṇa that now all of his senses were centred on Bhagavān. On the way there were many obstacles such as mud-holes and streams, but he was resolved in his determination and deeply meditated on Kṛṣṇa as he was going towards Vṛndāvana. Then one day a young boy came to him and said in a sweet voice, “Bābā, where are you going?”

Being pleased, Bilvamaṅgala replied, “My son, I am going to Vṛndāvana. Where are *You* going?”

“I am also going to Vṛndāvana – I make My living there.”

“Vṛndāvana? Then come with me, and hold my walking stick.”

They went off together, and wandering and wandering, they arrived in Vṛndāvana. On the way what happened? Inside his heart, Bilvamaṅgala experienced so many realisations about Kṛṣṇa that were just like nectar. This is called *sādhana*. Bilvamaṅgala was a *sādhaka*. What we described in the previous chapter concerning the *gopīs* was the stage of perfection. As the Gaṅgā emerges from the Himālayas and flows naturally towards the sea without any special effort, in the same way the tendency of the *gopīs*’ hearts flows in the direction of Kṛṣṇa’s feet without ever stopping. This is the level of perfection, but here we are discussing *sādhana*. *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and other scriptures declare that Bilvamaṅgala was a *sādhaka*, but then what are we? We are not even *sādhakas*. Being only on the first step of *vaidhī-bhakti*, will we be arrogant enough to call ourselves real *sādhakas*?

Śravaṇam, *kīrtanam*, *viṣṇu-smaraṇam*, *pāda-sevanam*, *arcanam*, *vandanam*, *dāsyam*, *sakhyam* and *ātma-nivedanam* – there are two kinds of these nine devotional activities. One is *vaidhī-bhakti* and the other is *rāgānuga-bhakti*. Devotion works in these two ways, and we must follow them both. It is not that we will leave *vaidhī-bhakti*, but internally our feelings will change. Our external forms will remain the same, but internally we will have *niṣṭhā*, firm faith. Those that have this can be called real *sādhakas*. How do they perform *sādhana*? With tears flowing from their eyes, they perceive their hearts as being in the form of a flower and they offer that flower to the feet of Kṛṣṇa. But without being asked, automatically Kṛṣṇa will come and take that flower.

Just as in the case of Bilvamaṅgala – he was a *sādhaka*, and in the end what happened? Kṛṣṇa Himself came and led him by the hand to Vṛndāvana. He was engaged in such *sādhana* that day and night he was in deep meditation, but not just passively. He was doing *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam*, and *pāda-sevanam* all

in the mood of a *sakhī*. From the beginning he did it with the sentiments of a *sakhī*. We should also execute that kind of *sādhana* wherein there is not even a trace of fruitive activity or impersonal knowledge. Then gradually one's own internal identity (*svarūpa*) will blossom, and in that form we can offer direct service to Kṛṣṇa. A *rāgānuga* devotee should practise *sādhana* like this.

There is also the example of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. Externally he appeared as a *sādhaka*, but internally he was a perfected soul. Internally he had fully realised his eternal *svarūpa*, but how did he behave externally?

*saṅkhyā-pūrvaka-nāma-gāna-natabhiḥ kālāvasānī-kṛtau
nidrāhāra-vihārakādi-vijitau cātyanta-dīnau ca yau
rādhā-kṛṣṇa-guṇa-smṛter madhurimānandena sammohitau
vande rūpa-sanātanau raghu-yugau śrī-jīva-gopālakau*

Śrī Ṣaḍ-gosvāmy-aṣṭakam (6)

He would chant the holy name in a regulated manner, and would daily only drink water after completing one *lākha* of *harināma*. Daily he would offer at least one thousand full prostrated obeisances to Vaiṣṇavas, to special places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and to the holy *dhāma*. He was very meek and humble, and day and night he was absorbed in thinking of Kṛṣṇa.

In his childhood he had received initiation from his family *guru* Yadunandana Ācārya, and he attained the association of Haridāsa Ṭhākura, by whose influence he began chanting the holy name. He is an eternally perfected soul, but here we will describe the activities he performed as an apparent *sādhaka*, which we should all accept and follow.

After some time Raghunātha dāsa was married to a girl of heavenly beauty. He was like a prince, and his physique was very soft and beautiful. At a very tender age, only sixteen, he went mad in separation from Kṛṣṇa. Many times he tried to leave home, but his family would always catch him and bring him

back. He received the mercy of Nityānanda Prabhu by offering some service to Him, and was then able to escape from his home. He ran at night through the forests so that he would not be detected. For seven days he didn't eat or drink anything until he arrived at the house of a milkman, who fed him some milk and puffed rice. At such a tender age, walking day and night he finally arrived in Jagannātha Purī.

Nowadays when we travel to the *dhāma*, we make a train reservation and take one or two thousand *rupees* in our pocket. But this is not the conventional standard for going to the *dhāma*. Raghunātha dāsa had completely left his home and family. Without taking any money or worrying about any arrangement for his eating and sleeping, and constantly crying in eagerness to meet Kṛṣṇa, he arrived in Purī where Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu embraced him. Mahāprabhu said, "You have left the stool-pit (the home of a materialist) to come here?" and He embraced him again. Sitting nearby was Svarūpa Dāmodara, and He placed Raghunātha dāsa in his care, saying, "Svarūpa Dāmodara will be your everything – your father, mother, brother, spiritual master – everything. Today I am handing you over to him, and therefore you should not worry about anything." Just see how Bhagavān personally placed him into the hands of such an exalted *guru*.

Raghunātha dāsa began staying in Purī and living in a most renounced fashion. How did he eat? His wealthy father wanted to make arrangements for his eating, but he rejected them. He would take the discarded rice from Jagannātha's kitchen that was even rejected by the cows, wash it, add a little salt, and maintain his life by eating that. His only possession was a clay pot for drinking water; he didn't even have a plate or a blanket. Since Purī is situated on the shore of the ocean, it does not become too cold or too hot, so making one arrangement or another he would sleep there. Taking a piece of old cloth left behind by others, he

would make a pair of *kaupīnas*, and wearing just those he would perform *bhajana*. But in comparison look at the clothes that we wear!

After His forty-eighth year Mahāprabhu left this world. In separation from Him, Raghunātha dāsa gave up eating altogether. Day and night he was crying. This is *sādhana*, and someone who lives like this can be called a *sādhaka*. Then, in separation from Mahāprabhu, Svarūpa Dāmodara gave up his body and entered Goloka Vraja. Then Raghunātha dāsa gave up even drinking water, and simply cried day and night.

He could not remain in Purī. Why? His condition was like that of Nanda Bābā after Kṛṣṇa had gone to Mathurā. Everything in Nanda Bābā's house reminded him of Kṛṣṇa: Kṛṣṇa's yellow cloth, Kṛṣṇa's flute, Kṛṣṇa's peacock feather, etc. He was in such intense pain that he thought he must leave his home. He went to the banks of the Yamunā, but there he saw Kṛṣṇa's footprints, and became overwhelmed in lamentation. He saw the tree from which Kṛṣṇa had jumped into the Yamunā and subdued Kāliya, and his remembrance of Kṛṣṇa just increased and he had to close his eyes. Then he went to Govardhana and there it seemed that all of the trees were bent over in separation, lamenting, "Where has Kṛṣṇa gone?" Seeing Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Śyāma-kuṇḍa, Kusuma-sarovara and Mānasī-gaṅgā all just increased Nanda Bābā's separation, until finally he returned home again.

In the same way, everything Raghunātha dāsa saw brought remembrance of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Svarūpa Dāmodara. Unable to stay in Purī, he walked all the way to Vṛndāvana. There he offered himself to the feet of Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī, and they asked him, "Why have you come here?"

He replied, "Mahāprabhu and Svarūpa Dāmodara have left this world, so I also cannot stay. I will give up my body by jumping from Govardhana, otherwise I will drown myself at midnight

in Rādhā-kuṇḍa, thereby attaining the feet of Rādhikā. For this reason I have come.” Just see what a thing divine separation is.

Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana prevented Raghunātha dāsa from committing suicide, and gave him a place to live at Rādhā-kuṇḍa where he executed all of his service. When after some time Rūpa and Sanātana also left this world in separation from Mahāprabhu, he thought, “Upon whom will I rely now?”

In his separation, Girirāja-Govardhana appeared to be a python ready to devour him, and Rādhā-kuṇḍa appeared to be a tigress. Nandagrāma, Varṣāṇā and all the places of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes now appeared empty. In separation from Rūpa Gosvāmī he again gave up drinking water, and only occasionally for maintaining his life he would take a few drops of buttermilk. Lamenting and rolling on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa he would cry:

he rādhe vraja-devīke ca lalite he nanda-sūno kutah

śrī-govardhana-kalpa-pādapa-tale kālindī-vanye kutah

Śrī Ṣaḍ-gosvāmy-aṣṭakam (8)

O Goddess of Vraja, Rādhikā! Where are You now? O Lalitā, where are you? O prince of Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, where are You? Are You sitting beneath the trees of Govardhana, or are You wandering in the forests of Vṇḍāvana?

Calling out in this way, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī would wander in the four directions of Vraja, overwhelmed in a mood of great separation. In this way he performed *bhajana*. At that time he would take the realisations of his heart in the form of flowers, and making a garland, would offer them to the effulgence of the toenails of Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s feet, uttering “Rādhā, Rādhā, Rādhā...” This is the *sādhana* for meeting Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

By practising *karma-yoga*, in the snap of a finger it is possible to go to the heavenly planets. After performing austerities, Dhruva even attained Vaikuṇṭha in that very body. But the *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*

that we are describing here is very rare and difficult to attain.

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī composed an offering of a handful of flowers in the form of a lamentation entitled *Śrī Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*, where he is praying for the service of Rādhikā: “O Rādhā, when will I get the opportunity to sweep Your house? In the form of a *gopī*, with my own hair I will wash Your drains with scented water. When will I get the special opportunity to apply *kuṅkuma* to Your feet?” These were his prayers. Such devotees are real *sādhakas*.

Śravaṇam, *kīrtanam*, *viṣṇu-smaraṇam* – in our line, what is the meaning of the words *viṣṇu-smaraṇam*? Remembrance of Rādhā, and remembering the amorous pastimes of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī wrote, “The descriptions of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes are my only ornament. I have no desire to hear anything besides this, and I have no desire to go even to Vaikuṇṭha. Taking just a piece of *roṭī* for my maintenance, I will never leave Vṛndāvana or Rādhā-kuṇḍa. My body may leave here, but my very life will never leave here.” This was his *niṣṭhā*, his resolute determination.

Great eagerness to attain the service of Bhagavān is necessary for *sādhana*. These devotees are real *sādhakas*, but what are we? We are just on the first step of *bhakti*, which is *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*, and that also is of two kinds: *niṣṭhita-bhakti* and *aniṣṭhita-bhakti*. Our *sādhana* is included within *aniṣṭhita-bhakti*, because our intelligence has not yet become immovable. Someone may be thinking, “I will do *bhajana* here at home with my parents because they are getting old anyway. Or, having heard that the household is likened to a lake of hell, I will leave it and join an *āśrama*. But then again, Arjuna, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura and the *gopīs* were great devotees and they were householders (*grhasthas*), therefore I should remain a *grhastha*. But Nārada, Śukadeva, the Gosvāmīs and Caitanya Mahāprabhu all referred

to family life as a dark well and left it. They were unable to do *bhajana* there. What will I do? Alright, I will remain for some time and then leave it. No, on second thought I will go immediately.” In this way we go on undoing what we have already done and being undecided. We have no *niṣṭhā*, firm resolution. We are practising *bhakti*, but it is *aniṣṭhita*, so we should endeavour to make our intelligence immovable and come to the stage of *niṣṭhā*.

Then after attaining *niṣṭhā* there are four kinds of obstacles (*anarthas*) to cross over. By sincerely chanting the holy name and hearing *hari-kathā*, then without being called, automatically prestige (*pratiṣṭhā*) will come.

*muktiḥ svayaṁ mukulitāñjaliḥ sevate 'smān
dharmartha-kāma-gatayaḥ samaya-pratiksāḥ*

Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta (107)

Mukti (liberation), with folded hands, will be standing behind us, saying, “My Lord, can I serve you in any way?” The eight yogic perfections will also come and stand behind us with folded hands ready to offer their services.

Having attained *niṣṭhā*, then we may be able to absorb our minds in Kṛṣṇa somewhat, but still some *anarthas* will remain. The reactions to our previous *karma* will still come, of either sinful or pious actions. Or we may be practising *karma-misra-bhakti*: covered *bhakti*, *bhakti* with selfish desires; then the fruit of that will come also. What big, important people of this world try so hard to attain but don’t get – these things will automatically become present before us. Abundant prestige will come to us, and we can easily become drowned in the enjoyment of that. Therefore be especially aware of this. There are four kinds of *anartha*: those arising from previous sins (*duṣkṛtottha*), those arising from previous piety (*sukṛtottha*), those arising from imperfect service (*bhakty uttha*) and those arising from offences in chanting

(*aparādhotttha*). Or if we even unknowingly commit an offence to the feet of a Vaiṣṇava, then its reaction must come.

We must leave these four kinds of *anartha* behind and move forward in *sādhana*. Our *niṣṭhā* will transform into *ruci*, and after *ruci*, then *āsakti* will come. In the stage of *āsakti*, we will have complete attachment in our *bhajana*.

*gurau goṣṭhe goṣṭhālayiṣu sujane bhūsurā-gaṇe
sva-mantre śrī-nāmnī vraja-nava-yuva-dvandva-śaraṇe
sadā dambhaṁ hitvā kuru ratim apūrvam atitarām
aye svāntarbhṛtāś-caṭubhir abhiyāce dhṛta-padaḥ*

Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā (1)

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī says, “O mind, taking your feet, I request one thing of you. Have deep attachment for the *mantra* that the spiritual master has given. Have deep attachment to those places where Kṛṣṇa has performed pastimes, such as Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Śyāma-kūṇḍa, Govardhana, Nandagrāma, Varṣāṇa, Saṅkeṭa, and the best place of all, the place of Rādhikā’s residence, Yāvaṭa. Ultimately, for rendering service to Rādhikā, one must live in Yāvaṭa. You should be attached to all of these places with deep sentiment.”

We should have *niṣṭhā* and *āsakti* for both the worship itself (*bhajana*) and for the object of worship (*bhajanīya*). *Bhajana* is hearing and chanting and so forth, and *bhajanīya* is Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. When our *ruci* becomes fully mature for both of these, it will be *āsakti*, and then by the mercy of Bhagavān one’s heart will never deviate from Him. This is all included within “*mad-bhakto* – become My devotee.”

The following story illustrates how Kṛṣṇa cares for those who have really become His devotees. There was a *brāhmaṇa* devotee of Kṛṣṇa who had read many scriptures and many commentaries on *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He read the *Gītā* every

day, and while reading, many spiritual sentiments would arise within him. He wrote down his realisations and desired to publish them so that ordinary people would be able to easily understand them. In this way he was engaged in *bhajana*. From the beginning he never took any employment. He would only beg for one hour each day, and the rest of the time he would study the scriptures, chant the holy name and perform *śravaṇam-kīrtanam*.

He married, and he and his wife were very content together, living on whatever Bhagavān gave them. They had no material desires at all. They only read the *Gītā* and contemplated spiritual topics. In the early afternoon, when most people take their main meal of the day, he would go out begging. His wife would prepare whatever he collected, and the couple would subsist solely on that.

His wife only had one piece of clothing. One day, he took his wife's cloth and tore from it enough pieces to cover himself to go out and beg. Before going out, he had been writing down the meaning of *Gītā* verses one after the other. Then this verse came:

*ananyāś cintayanto mām
ye janāḥ paryupāsate
teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānām
yoga-kṣemaṃ vahāmy aham*

Bhagavad-gītā (9.22)

He began to analyse this verse: “*Ananyāś cintayanto mām*: those whose minds are fully self-controlled, who have no other object of meditation besides Kṛṣṇa. *Ye janāḥ paryupāsate*: one who worships Kṛṣṇa in all ways, especially by the medium of hearing and chanting, becomes situated very near to Him. *Teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānām*: for those who are fixed in performing *bhajana* like this, then its result also is for the happiness of Kṛṣṇa, not for themselves. Even if a person of bad conduct engages in this type of exclusive *bhajana*, then Kṛṣṇa will accept him. And if that

exclusive sentiment is not there, then Kṛṣṇa will never reveal Himself. This verse is related to *sādhana*, not the stage of perfection. To those who have exclusively taken shelter of Kṛṣṇa, He is their protector and maintainer. Besides Him there is no other.”

This *brāhmaṇa*’s nature was very humble and surrendered. While studying this verse, many nice sentiments were arising inside him. Then he came to the last line of the verse. “*Yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*: Kṛṣṇa is saying that for His devotees who engage in *bhajana* in this way, He will supply all of their requirements such as food and water, and even collect them and carry them Himself.”

The *brāhmaṇa* stopped and thought, “How can this be? This is not right. Why? I am now an old man, over seventy years old. Up until today Bhagavān has never directly looked after us like this. We have been engaged in exclusive *bhajana*, and today there is not a single mouse in our home. Why? Because there is no food in the house! We don’t even have any earthen pots to catch the rainwater. There is nothing in our home, not even any foodstuffs for today’s meal! I will go out to beg and whatever I acquire, we will take that only. Isn’t Bhagavān seeing this? Is He not inside all souls witnessing everything? Certainly He hasn’t taken care of us as He is saying in this verse. Maybe if we require something, He would inspire another person to come and help us, but He would never carry a burden for us on His own head. I cannot accept this.”

Then with a red pen the *brāhmaṇa* scratched this verse out, thinking, “It is not possible for Kṛṣṇa to have spoken this verse. Someone else must have inserted it.”

Then he went begging, thinking, “Kṛṣṇa will carry what we require on His own body? Perhaps He would inspire a king or some wealthy man to come and help us, but He wouldn’t carry anything on His own head. The all-knowing and all-powerful

Lord? I have heard that he made the poor *brāhmaṇa* Sudāmā into a king, but He didn't physically carry any burden for him. I have never heard this."

He put it out of his mind and went on begging. Wandering and wandering, three o'clock passed and he still hadn't collected a single thing. For instance one man said to him, "Bābā, I am sorry, but our house is impure. For three days we cannot give anything because one of our family members has just died."

Like this he didn't get anything, so he started for home. Meanwhile, at his home, what was happening? A beautiful young boy with a dark complexion and wearing yellow cloth arrived at the gate carrying a *bhaṅgī*, a long stick with a bag of goods on each end, on his shoulders. The bag on one end contained rice, dahl, ghee and spices, and the bag at the other end contained sugar, vegetables and different things. He did not appear strong enough to carry it. He was young, perhaps only fourteen years old, and His limbs were very delicate. He was perspiring, and arriving at the gate, He called out, "Guru-ānījī (wife of the spiritual master), please open the door!"

The *brāhmaṇa*'s wife replied, "What? My husband has no disciples."

The boy replied, "Yes, yes, it is possible."

She said, "Then who?"

"I who am speaking, I am a disciple of your husband."

She thought, "What is this? Where has He come from?" She was unable to open the door because she didn't even have enough clothing to properly cover herself. But Kṛṣṇa understood everything, so He handed His own shawl through the door for her to wear. He said, "Mother, Gurujī has sent Me. We have obtained all of these things today. He grabbed Me and sent Me here, saying that he will be coming soon. I asked him to please wait a minute so I could get a drink of water, but he said, 'No, You can

drink water and all of that later. Go immediately to my home.’ Seeing that I am such a young boy, still he loaded all of this on Me and sent Me here.”

Hearing all of this the *brāhmaṇa*’s wife began to weep, and thought, “Such a tender young boy, and He is perspiring as well! Doesn’t this *brāhmaṇa* have any mercy? He himself will come empty-handed, and he has loaded everything on this poor boy? He has no mercy.”

Showing her His back, the boy said, “Mother, he has also scratched Me with his nails.”

“Oh! It looks like it will bleed!” She took Him on her lap and said, “My son, when he comes, I will give him a good talking to! He poses as a big, self-controlled devotee, but he cannot even show mercy to a child! My dear son, please come inside.” She brought Him inside and said, “Sit here and I will prepare something. You will not leave here without being fed.”

She went to the kitchen and began to prepare the rice, dahl and vegetables that He had brought. Then there was a knock at the door; the *brāhmaṇa* had arrived. “Open the door!” he said.

Very annoyed, the *brahmaṇa*’s wife went to the door and said, “Have you brought anything? You have come empty-handed? You loaded everything on that poor boy and then scratched Him with your nails? Don’t you have even a little mercy?”

The *brāhmaṇa* replied, “What? What are you talking about?”

“You know very well – that boy you sent here loaded up with everything you collected.”

“Who? I don’t know anything of all this!”

“You loaded it all on that poor child and you have brought nothing yourself!”

“Where is he then?”

“Come inside and see!”

They went inside the house, but the boy was nowhere to be

seen. They searched the entire house, and all they found was a thread of yellow cloth where He had been sitting. After searching and not finding Him, the *brāhmaṇa* took his *Gītā* in his hands and opened it. Discovering that the red ink with which he crossed out the verse was no longer there, he began weeping bitterly, and said, “Today, for us, see how Bhagavān has carried our burden! This is our evidence. My doubt is now dispelled.”

This is *bhakti*, and an example of the *sādhana* that produces *bhakti*. Arjuna said, “My Lord, to do this, here on this battlefield, will be very difficult. I could not do *man-manā bhava*, and I also cannot do *mad-bhaktō*. Please tell me a method that is simple, straight and easy.”

Next the Lord will explain “*mad-yājī* – worship Me.”

Chapter Three

mad-yājī mām namaskuru

Worship Me and Offer Obeisances to Me

*sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ
śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ
iṣṭo 'si me dṛḍham iti
tato vakṣyāmi te hitam
man-manā bhava mad-bhakto
mad-yājī mām namaskuru
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te
pratijāne priyo 'si me*

Bhagavad-gītā (18.64–5)

Because you are so dear to Me, I am now telling you this most hidden and confidential truth. Hear this from Me; it is for your benefit. Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me, offer prostrated obeisances to Me, and then certainly you will come to Me. Because you are dear to Me, I make this promise.

Here, what is the meaning of the word *paramam*? The supreme essence of all the scriptures. If one is not surrendered by his mind, body and words to the feet of the spiritual master and Bhagavān, then Kṛṣṇa will not reveal these truths to him. How must we surrender to the *guru*? As it says in the *Gītā*:

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

Bhagavad-gītā (4.34)

One who approaches the *guru* with these three tendencies: submission (*praṇipātena*), relevant inquiry (*paripraśnena*) and sincere service (*sevayā*) is qualified to understand this knowledge. If someone approaches the *guru* and demands answers to his questions, or if he doesn't attentively listen to the answers and has to ask the same questions again, then the *guru* will only give him superficial instructions. He will not give *sarva-guhyatama*, the most hidden knowledge. Concerning this, Kṛṣṇa has taken a vow that to anyone whose heart has not been purified by austerities, who is not surrendered and who has not served *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, the essential knowledge of the *Gītā* will not be given.

First Kṛṣṇa only told Arjuna to perform sacrifice:

*yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra
loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ*

Bhagavad-gītā (3.9)

Perform your work as a sacrifice to Bhagavān, otherwise it will be a cause of material bondage.

After that the Lord gave *brahma-jñāna*, and then He gave *paramātmajñāna*: “Try to meditate on the form of Viṣṇu who is the size of a thumb inside your heart:

*yoginām api sarveṣāṁ
mad-gatenāntarātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām
sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*

Bhagavad-gītā (6.47)

Yoga is better than fruitive work (*karma*), impersonal knowledge (*jñāna*) or dry austerity (*tapasya*). And of all types of *yogīs*, the one

who has surrendered to Paramātmā, who is fully united with Him in *yoga* and who is exclusively worshipping Him with faith, is the best.

Up to here Kṛṣṇa has not revealed His ultimate form; He has only recommended that we should be inclined towards Paramātmā. Then at the end of the *Gītā* He gives the verse that we are discussing, *man-manā bhava*. When He says that we should always think of Him, who is He referring to? Śyāmasundara, who has very, very beautiful hair, and on whose head the peacock feather is always present. He who is standing in His threefold-bending posture under a *kadamba* tree in a *kuñja* of Vṛndāvana. He who is holding the flute to His beautiful lips, with the nectar of His heart pouring out from the holes of the flute. We should always think of *this* Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa has not revealed this form in the *Gītā* until this verse.

Giving the example of the *gopīs*, we have explained what is *man-manā bhava*. In relation to *mad-bhakto*, we explained what are *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam*, etc. and we looked at how some great devotees performed *sādhana*. We explained how they, by following the vision presented in the books of the Gosvāmīs, practised *sādhana* and attained Bhagavān.

In the stage of *bhāva*, *man-manā bhava* may be a little possible, but only in the stage of *prema* can we really always be thinking of Kṛṣṇa. It is very rare that someone will reach the stage of *bhāva* in their spiritual practice. In the process of becoming a devotee (*mad-bhakto*), first there is *śraddhā*, then *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, *āsakti* and finally *bhāva*. At the stage of *bhāva* it can be said that one has really become a devotee, and can really begin to think of Kṛṣṇa.

Next Kṛṣṇa says, “*Mad-yājī*.” *Yājī* means *yajña*, sacrifice. If one has not yet developed any real love for Bhagavān, but has just a little faith, then he can perform *yajña*. This sacrifice is a treatment for material entanglement. A verse concerning this is found

in the conversation between Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Rāya Rāmānanda (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 8.69)). The deity may be worshipped with sixteen kinds of paraphernalia, or with twelve kinds, or with five kinds, but if there is no love in the *pūjā*, Bhagavān will never be satisfied. When hunger and thirst are present, then food and water are tasteful. Food will only be tasteful to the degree that there is hunger. If we are not hungry, and someone serves us some nicely prepared vegetables, we will say indifferently, “Oh, what have you made?” Then tasting it, we will say, “There is not enough salt in it.” Or we will say that there is too much salt in it. We will consider the sweet rice to be too thin, the *capātī* to be out of shape and the *rasagullā* to be flat, not round as it should be. But if we are hungry, we may take a stale *capātī*, add some water and perhaps squeeze a lemon on it, and consider that it is very tasteful. If we are hungry, then food will be tasteful.

Similarly, if there is no love in a *sādhaka*, then Bhagavān will not be hungry and will not be satisfied by that devotee’s *arcana*. If Bhagavān is made hungry by a devotee’s *prema*, then whether there have been sixteen kinds of paraphernalia used or only one kind, He will accept it.

*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam
aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ*

Bhagavad-gītā (9.26)

Kṛṣṇa says here that if one simply offers Him a leaf, a flower, some fruit or water with love, He will accept it. Whatever is offered with love He will accept. In a devotee’s heart there should always be this love that creates hunger in Kṛṣṇa.

There is one point here that we must understand. We should not be thinking, “Why is this offering for the pleasure of the Lord?

Ultimately it is for our own happiness.” In the *Bhāgavatam* (1.2.6) it says:

*sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo
yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaituky apratihata
yayātmā suprasīdati*

The supreme *dharma* for human society is pure devotion to Adhokṣaja, the Transcendental Person. This devotion must be free of ulterior motives and practised constantly to completely satisfy the self.

Don’t attach the meaning to the last line of this verse, *yayātmā suprasīdati*, that this is indicating our own happiness and satisfaction. Then it becomes the desire for enjoyment, lust. *Ātmā* here refers not to ourselves, but that rather for Śrī Adhokṣaja, Bhagavān, we are performing *bhakti*. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the one to be pleased, and if He is satisfied then our *pūjā* is successful. If an activity has been done for our own pleasure, then we can understand that it is only done out of lust. But there is one thing: if Bhagavān is pleased, then automatically the *jīva* attains his own satisfaction. But if we are offering *pūjā* for our own interests, then it will be *sakāma-bhakti*, devotion with selfish motives. We must understand this point well: no desire for our own pleasure should remain, otherwise it becomes impure *arcana*. Most householders, while performing *arcana*, pray, “O Lord, I offer the fruit of all of my activity to Your feet.” But what is it really for? “The happiness and peace of myself and my family.” We should not offer *arcana* with such desires.

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the story of Pṛthu Mahārāja shows us what is proper *arcana*. King Vena was an atheist who had no faith in Bhagavān and had actually insulted Him, so the sages decided that he was no longer qualified to occupy the throne. Simply by using sound vibration they killed him, but actually it was the

reactions to his own sins that killed him. Now without a king, the subjects were all very frightened. Dacoits were causing disturbances and perpetrating cruel and mischievous acts, so the people prayed to the sages for protection. The sages decided to churn the thighs of the dead body of Vena, and from them a sinful personality named Niṣāda was produced. Next they churned the arms of Vena's body, and from them Pṛthu Mahārāja appeared. What is the meaning of *pṛthu*? One whose fame will be spread in all directions because of his good qualities, and who can protect and nurture his subjects, is called *pṛthu*. He didn't appear alone; a woman appeared with him. Her name was Arci, and just as Pṛthu Mahārāja was an empowered incarnation (*śaktyāveśa-avatāra*), she was an incarnation of Lakṣmī-devī. The activity that she performs is called *arcana*. What does Lakṣmī do? She serves her master, Nārāyaṇa, and if anyone serves Bhagavān in this way, it is called *arcana*.

Because of the cruelty of Vena and others, the Earth had hidden all of the food grains inside herself. She was not giving anything, and therefore many sinful personalities were born. The people were frightened, hungry and praying for protection. Then Pṛthu Mahārāja fixed an arrow to his bow, pointed it at the Earth and said, "You have hidden all of the food grains within you and are not giving them, so the people cannot be nurtured. Therefore I will kill you."

Trembling in fear, the Earth personified assumed the form of a cow and fled. Seeing that Pṛthu Mahārāja pursued her wherever she went, she turned back and said, "O Master, please don't do this. I am surrendered to you, and you should not kill a cow. You are an incarnation of Bhagavān, so you should protect me. Please do this: bring a calf, and by my affection for the calf, milk will automatically begin to flow from me. Also bring a pot for the milk and a milkman, and then please take milk from me."

Pṛthu Mahārāja transformed Svāyambhuva Manu into a calf, then he himself milked all of the food grains from the Earth, keeping them in his cupped hands. Enough food for all living entities was produced and distributed, and everyone was satisfied. After this, Pṛthu Mahārāja initiated the performance of one hundred horse sacrifices at Brahmagavata, where the river Sarasvatī flows towards the east. They had completed ninety-nine of the sacrifices when Indra, seeing that the final sacrifice was about to be completed, thought, “If they complete these one hundred sacrifices, then they will disrespect me, and possibly even snatch away my position as the king of heaven.”

Therefore he came in an invisible form, stole the horse and flew away into the sky. The sage Atri saw everything and instructed the son of Pṛthu Mahārāja to kill Indra immediately. Pṛthu’s son fixed an arrow to his bow and prepared to kill Indra, but then he saw that Indra was wearing the false dress of a *sannyāsī*, with red cloth, the markings of three horizontal lines on his forehead, his body smeared with ashes and his hair knotted at the top of his head. Thinking him to be a holy man, Pṛthu’s son did not release his arrows. This is the dress of an atheist, not a devotee. Rāvaṇa wore this same type of dress when he kidnapped Sītā.

When Indra saw that the son of Pṛthu, having been informed that Indra was a fraud, was again coming to kill him, he left behind the animal and the false dress and fled. Again they started the sacrifice, and again Indra came. This time he was carrying a trident in one hand, a staff holding a human skull in the other, and wearing red cloth and a garland of very large *rudrākṣa* beads, the type that are jagged and scratch the skin. Again Pṛthu’s son prepared to kill him, and again Indra left that dress and fled. Those that adopted this discarded dress of Indra later came to be known as *nara-kapālī*, those that hold a human skull. Previously there were many of these so-called holy men, but now there are

very few. This happened several times, and each time Indra left behind the dress of an atheist. There were some people who adopted these different dresses and started new atheistic orders.

Seeing that Indra would not be killed by his son, Pṛthu Mahārāja became extremely angry. He fixed an arrow to his bow and prepared to kill Indra himself, but the sages began to pacify him, saying, “Mahārāja, don’t be angry. Please sit here and be peaceful. By *mantra* we will call Indra and cast him into the fire.”

Pṛthu Mahārāja took his seat, and the sages chanted *indram yajāmahe* with such potency that Indra was pulled there from heaven along with his throne, which is generally fixed in heaven. As the sages were about to place him in the fire, he remembered the grandfather of all, Lord Brahmā, who immediately appeared there and said, “You cannot kill Indra. He is a partial expansion of Bhagavān and serves Bhagavān in many ways. Therefore don’t place him in the fire. Release him, because the aim of your sacrifices will be fulfilled anyway. You are a great personality; for you what is the necessity of killing Indra? The body is not the soul; the body is different from the soul. Those that consider the body to be the soul are atheists and conditioned souls. You know this philosophical concept well, so why must you kill Indra? Therefore release him, and again begin the sacrifice.”

On Brahmā’s insistence they released Indra, and again started the sacrifice. Then Viṣṇu appeared in the sacrificial arena, with club, lotus, disc and conchshell in His four hands and Indra at His side. He said, “Your sacrifice is now complete. Forgive Indra. He is My partial expansion, and through him I protect and nurture the world, so you should not remain angry with him for stealing the sacrificial horse. There are those who have performed sacrifices with a desire for their own enjoyment, such as kings who wanted to expand their empires. Their *arcana* was based on a bodily conception of life, but Pṛthu Mahārāja has

performed these sacrifices exclusively for the satisfaction of Hari, knowing full well the difference between the body and the soul. Your sacrifices are now successful.”

The instruction of this sacrifice is that *pūjā* should be done exclusively for the service of Hari and with full knowledge of the soul (*ātma-jñāna*). Then Bhagavān will be pleased. Pṛthu Mahārāja performed these sacrifices for the protection and welfare of all living entities, and therefore for the pleasure of Bhagavān. If this prime factor, this service, is not there, then Bhagavān will never be satisfied. This service was present in the worship of Pṛthu Mahārāja, as it is in the worship of the *gopīs* and all other great devotees.

We have given an example from the scriptures, now we will tell a story from our own experience here in Mathurā. From it we can see how we should have love and attachment for our *pūjā*. There was a man who was worshipping a *sālagrāma-silā*. He didn’t know all of the *mantras* and finer details of *pūjā*, but in an ordinary way he was going on with his worship. His vow was that by four o’clock every morning he would return home from bathing in the river Yamunā with some Yamunā water to use for his *pūjā* and for applying his *tilaka*. He would not use any water except Yamunā water, and with great faith he performed his *pūjā* in this way without deviation for about ten or fifteen years.

Then came one new moon night in the month of Māgha [January–February], and it was extremely dark. A very strong wind was blowing and it was raining very hard for the entire night. The water of the Yamunā had risen and was flowing very fiercely near Viśrāma-ghāṭa, where he would usually bathe and collect his water. He was shivering from the cold. It was approximately three o’clock in the morning, but he wasn’t sure of the time. In those days there were no wristwatches. People would simply look to see the positions of the Dhruva and Śukra stars

and in this way estimate the time. But on this night the stars could not be seen due to the dense clouds. After bathing in the Yamunā, it was so dark and raining so hard that he became lost and could not make out the way to his home. He was in great anxiety about protecting his vow, thinking, “How will I make it home? What will I do?”

Then he saw a small boy of Mathurā coming. He had a large bag on His head folded over twice to protect Him from the rain, and He was carrying a lantern in His hand. He asked in a very sweet voice, “Bābā, where are you going?”

The man told Him the name of his street and his house number, and the boy replied, “Yes, I know that place. I am going near there. Come, I will show you the way.”

The man placed his faith in the boy and they went off together. On the way the boy didn’t say anything at all and the man thought to himself, “Why has this young boy come out on a night like this?” Shivering, he continued following the boy until He turned and said, “Bābā, here is your street. Your house is up that way. I am going onward.”

The man began walking towards his house, but then some doubt arose in his mind, and he turned and looked in the direction of the boy. But he didn’t see the boy or His light. Putting his hand to his head, he began to repent: “Bhagavān, to protect my vow, came in that dress, holding a lantern to show me the way.”

This is *arcana*. We should have this kind of firm determination with no consideration of our own happiness or unhappiness. This is real hunger, and if we perform *pūjā* with this hunger, with this *prema*, then will Bhagavān not accept it? Therefore Kṛṣṇa says *prayatātmanah* (*Bhagavad-gītā* (9.26)): if anyone simply offers Him something with faith and love, He will certainly accept it.

Also, if in the course of serving our *guru* he reprimands us for something and we make a mountain out of a molehill, thinking, “Gurudeva used to be so affectionate to me, but now receiving this treatment I will leave him,” then this is wrong, and we shouldn’t think in this way. So many difficulties will come to test us in the service of our *guru*, but our resolution should be that, “birth after birth I will never leave my spiritual master or my Lord.”

There is another story related to *pūjā* and *arcana*. There was a *brāhmaṇa* who was performing deity worship, and after completing the *pūjā* he would make an offering of food, and for this he would receive some wages. If he first received payment, he would perform the *pūjā*, but if he didn’t receive any wages, he wouldn’t do it. So what was his real love for? In Bihar and Bengal there are such professional *pūjārīs* who travel from house to house. They receive only uncooked food for the *pūjā*, such as rice, vegetables and fruit, and some flowers and clothing also. They then show these items to the deity, complete the *pūjā*, and then stash all of the items in their clothing. They go to a great many houses doing *pūjā* like this, and at the end of the day they look to see, “How much have I collected?” and then return home.

So this *brāhmaṇa* would only perform *pūjā* wherever he could earn his wages. Once, when he was going away for a couple of days, he lovingly called his son and said, “My dear son, every day after bathing the deity make the offering of food.” The boy had not learned much about *pūjā*, but still he replied, “I will do as you ask.”

Later while his mother was preparing *capātīs* and *sabjī*, the boy bathed the deity with Ganges water and *tulasī* leaves and after dressing Him, he placed the deity back on His *śimhāsana*. Next he placed the *capātīs* and *sabjī* before the deity, and carefully placing

a *tulasī* leaf on each preparation, said, “Ṭhākuraṇī, please take Your meal now. I don’t know all of the appropriate *mantras*, but You please eat. I will remain standing just here.”

He stood there for some time and then earnestly said, “Ṭhākuraṇī, I have been standing here for nearly half an hour now, and looking at Your plate I see that You still have not eaten. When my father offers You food, You eat it with great delight in only three or four minutes. But just because I don’t know the *mantras*, You are not eating. Will You remain hungry just because my father is not here? Then I also will not eat. As long as You don’t eat, I will also not take anything.”

With great love and sincerity he was saying this. If this sentiment is not in our chanting of the *mantra*, then the *mantra* will never be effective. The *mantra* is meant to awaken this sentiment within us, and if we are serving the deity without this sentiment, then how will He ever accept what we offer?

After waiting a few moments more, the boy said, “O Lord, You will not eat? Then I will go to sleep without eating or drinking.”

Then Bhagavān could no longer restrain Himself. He leapt down from His *śimhāsana*, took His seat and ate the offering with both hands. He didn’t leave anything whatsoever on the plate, and He was very pleased. The boy took the empty plate back to the kitchen and said, “Mother, Bhagavān has finished eating. With great difficulty, I finally got Him to accept the offering.”

The boy’s mother said, “What do you mean ‘He ate it’? Where have the *capātīs* gone? Where is the *śabji*?”

“He ate them.”

“He ate them? How is it possible?”

The next day the boy fed Bhagavān in the same way, and the following day the *brāhmaṇa* returned home. His wife said to him, “For two nights we have gone to sleep without eating or drinking anything.”

“Why?” the *brāhmaṇa* asked.

“Ṭhākuraṇī has eaten everything that was offered to Him.”

“Ṭhākuraṇī has eaten? How?”

After some deliberation, the *brāhmaṇa* called his son and said, “My dear son, a rat must have taken the offerings. They especially like to make their homes under old *śimhāsana*s like we have here. With great comfort he is living and very easily he is getting whatever he needs to eat, and he is also getting plenty of ghee to drink.”

But his son insisted, “No, Ṭhākuraṇī has eaten it all!”

“All right, all right. Tonight you again make the offering.”

That night, unknown to his son, the *brāhmaṇa* hid nearby while his son was making the offering to see if the deity was really eating it or not. The boy said, “Lord, don’t be late. Please come quickly and take Your meal.” But the deity stayed in His place, so the boy said, “Lord, why are You not eating? You have become shy? Why? What has happened?”

Then softly a voice came: “Today, your father is watching from over there. Therefore I will not come.”

The boy replied, “Why? You must come and eat. If you don’t eat, I will be very unhappy.”

Then the deity said, “Go over and simply touch your father.”

The boy did so, and at that time the boy’s pure sentiment arose within his father, and then the *brāhmaṇa* could see how the deity was actually eating the offering.

This is the necessary sentiment for performing *pūjā*. If there is no such sentiment, no such faith, then there is no qualification for *pūjā*. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says (*Bhagavad-gītā* (9.26)):

*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam
aśnāmi prayatātmanah*

I accept whatever is offered to Me by those who have this exalted sentiment of pure devotion.

Arjuna said, “My Lord, it is not possible for me to do this type of *arcana* here on this battlefield. Please tell me an even easier way.”

Then Kṛṣṇa said, “You need something easier? Then *mām namaskuru*: just offer obeisances unto Me.”

Not just any obeisances, but the meaning of the word *namaskāra* is offering it without any false ego.

sarva-dharmān parityajya

mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja

Bhagavad-gītā (18.66)

Give up all kinds of religion and just surrender exclusively to Me.

Taking this instruction to heart we should offer obeisances to Kṛṣṇa. For one who offers *namaskāra* to Kṛṣṇa like this just once, it is as if from above he has jumped into a vast body of water – which is the ocean of material existence – and then at once looks back and sees that he has already crossed it.

daśāśvamedhī punar eti janma

kṛṣṇa-praṇāmī na punar bhavāya

Even one who has performed ten horse sacrifices takes birth again, but one who has just once offered obeisances to Kṛṣṇa never takes birth again.

One will not again enter the cycle of birth and death. One will not be again forced into the womb of a mother if they have offered obeisances to Kṛṣṇa just once with exclusive surrender. This is the meaning of *mām namaskuru*.

So Arjuna said, “My Lord, I offer obeisances to You not just once, but hundreds of times!”

In this verse, Kṛṣṇa says, “*Mad-bhakto* – become My devotee. *Man-manā bhava* – absorbing your mind and heart in Me,

engage in *bhajana* unto Me. At the end of that *bhajana*, *mad-yājī* – worship Me, and after performing *pūjā* offer prostrated obeisances to Me.”

Now all four activities described in this verse have become one. With great faith, sentiment and love, sincerely following all of the limbs of *bhakti*, offer your *namaskāra* to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is *sarva-guhyatama*, the most hidden treasure, and *paramam vacaḥ*, the supreme instruction, of *Bhagavad-gītā*. If anyone earnestly follows just this one verse, they will certainly cross over the ocean of material existence and attain exclusive *prema* at the feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

In condensed form this verse of the *Gītā* is showing us how to attain the *bhakti* of Vraja, and then in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* this conception is delineated in an expanded form. Therefore the beginning book is *Bhagavad-gītā*, and we should never disrespect the *Gītā* in any way. The instructions in it should serve as the foundation upon which we will construct a palace of *bhakti* wherein we will perform *pūjā* to Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa with great love. This is the essence of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Chapter Four

Vasanta-pañcamī

Vasanta-pañcamī is the first day of the *vasanta*, or spring, season. Vasanta-pañcamī and the spring season have their own special importance, and especially Hindu people celebrate this with great respect. On this day, we pick the mustard flower, barley and wheat, and offer them to our favourite deity. From today, taking drums, *karatālas* and different kinds of instruments, we play *vasanta-rāgas*, special melodies for the spring season, and the festival of Holī begins. There will be so many songs and *kīrtanas*, and all are related to Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In previous times this was done even more, but now society has changed somewhat. Still there is great enthusiasm for this festival.

This time of year, in the trees, creepers, animals, birds, in any conscious entity, *rasa* seems to increase. In the mango tree, flower buds will certainly appear. In the groves of mango trees, the cuckoo will eat these buds and start making a *kū-kū* sound. The trees and creepers will shed their old leaves and change, and be newly decorated with new, soft, red leaves. It is as if they have come to participate in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *vasantī-rāsa*, and with their new decoration, they are encouraging Him. All of nature at once changes; such is the spring season.

Also, in Vraja, from this very day, Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* begin their *vasantī-rāsa*. There is one *rāsa* called *śārādīya*-, or autumn,

rāsa, and another called *vasantī-rāsa*. On this day, in Bengal, there is worship of the goddess Sarasvatī. Bengal is mainly a province of *śāktas*, those who worship *śakti*, potency. From the potency of Rādhikā come Sarasvatī and Durgā, and according to our line of thought, there is no special difference between Sarasvatī and Durgā. With great decoration the Bengalis worship Sarasvatī, the goddess of knowledge. We worship Śuddha-Sarasvatī, the dear potency of Bhagavān who makes the *jīvas* move in the direction of Bhagavān. There is also Vimalānanda-Sarasvatī, who is the servant of Śuddha-Sarasvatī and another form of her. *Vimala* means pure: she who in pure form gives great pleasure (*ānanda*) to Kṛṣṇa is known as Vimalānanda-Sarasvatī. She bestows knowledge throughout the entire universe, and the people of the world serve her. Because Śuddha-Sarasvatī is the root cause of the good opportunity to hear pure *hari-kathā*, first of all we should offer *praṇāma* to her, and then we may make an effort to enter into everything related to *vasantī-rāsa*.

Kṛṣṇa has different *rāsas* at different times. Amongst them, *śārādīya-rāsa* and *vasantī-rāsa* have their own special importance. To give great pleasure to all of the *nitya-siddha-gopīs* and *sādhana-siddha-gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa commences the *śārādīya-rāsa*. No activity or pastime of Kṛṣṇa is done for His own pleasure, whereas any activity that we do, even up to serving the deity, is done for our own pleasure. We are serving the *guru* for what? To get some future pleasure from it, so we will attain something. We may be performing *bhajana*, but in doing that, the idea of giving pleasure to Kṛṣṇa is secondary. It should be the prime consideration, but in our conditioned state we are serving merely for our own peace of mind. That which we do for ourselves is not *bhakti*. Gradually, when what we do becomes solely for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa and His associates, then only will it be *bhakti*. It must be purely for

Kṛṣṇa, for Rādhā, for Their associates, and then it will be *suddha-bhakti*, unalloyed devotion.

Kṛṣṇa is Himself the crown jewel of those who are *ātmārāma* and *āptakāma*: He has no unfulfilled desire. All of His desires are satisfied, so He doesn't need to take anything from anyone to become complete. In living entities we find this quality of incompleteness: in our happiness, knowledge, renunciation or whatever, we are not complete. By taking from Kṛṣṇa, or taking from other people, we want to become complete, but Kṛṣṇa is *ātmārāma* and *āptakāma*. He needs nothing to enjoy, but upon seeing the desires of His devotees, the desire to enjoy arises within Him.

*bhagavān api tā rātrīḥ
śāradotphulla-mallikāḥ
vīkṣya rantuṁ manaś cakre
yoga-māyām upāśritāḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.29.1)

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, witnessing the arrival of those autumn nights scented with blossoming jasmine flowers, desired to enjoy loving affairs, and for this purpose He employed His Yogamāyā potency.

Bhagavān is *āptakāma*, but still there is some desire in His heart because He is *rasika*, and also *raso vai saḥ* – the emporium of *rasa*. There is also desire in the hearts of the *gopīs* to taste that *rasa*. Although Kṛṣṇa is *ātmārāma* and *āptakāma*, today He will be drowned in *rasa* because within the *gopīs* is the desire that Kṛṣṇa will be pleased. For this purpose they worshipped the goddess Kātyāyanī, and one year before, during the month of Kārttika, she gave them a boon, and now their hearts are eager for the fulfilment of that boon.

The description of *śāradīya-rāsa* has been given in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and it is very beautiful and pleasing to the heart.

Vasantī-rāsa has been described in *Gīta-govinda* by Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī. One other topic of *rāsa*, *āścarya-rāsa*, has been described by Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī in a small book of Sanskrit poetry named *Āścarya-rāsa-prabandha*.

What is the meaning of *rāsa*? *Maṇḍalī-vādyā-nṛtya*: when in an independent way, one hero and many different heroines come together and dance to instruments playing scriptural music, it is called *rāsa*. This particular type of dancing has been described in the scriptures, and we do not see that this *rāsa* is performed by any other incarnation of Bhagavān besides Kṛṣṇa. They are able to do it, but have not, so then what to speak of any human being. If any human does this, it is called lust and considered degraded behaviour. When those devotees who for millions of births have rejected worldly desires and pleasures and have performed *bhajana* with the sentiment of the *gopīs*, for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa meet together in a group in an independent, free way, dancing to different instruments playing scriptural music, *that* is *rāsa*. But the scriptures have accepted this in relation to Kṛṣṇa only, and rejected any possibility of it being related to anyone else. Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* are engaged in the *rāsa* dance for each other's pleasure, and in this there is such an increase in *prema* that you will not find it fully described in any scripture.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa Himself, the crown jewel of all performers of pastimes, has said, "Upon coming together for this *rāsa* dance, what has happened within My heart? In My heart what are the feelings, and how are they arising?"

Just as milk is heated and boils over, the waves within Kṛṣṇa's heart are such that He Himself is unable to describe them. And it is the same for the *gopīs* also: when you have forgotten your own body, what can you describe? Therefore a few elevated personalities, such as Vyāsadeva, in the trance of meditation saw this phenomenon from a position of neutrality. Otherwise they would

have become emotionally involved in it and become bewildered also. The *gopīs* were bewildered, Kṛṣṇa was bewildered, and unless one was seeing it from an aloof position, one would not be able to describe it. Therefore Vyāsa was able to describe a little of it.

The goddess Kātyāyanī had given the *gopīs* a boon, and on the day of Śārādīya-pūrṇimā, Kṛṣṇa saw the moon in a special way. In the autumn season, when the moon is full, there are no clouds, smoke or dust in the sky, and all becomes clear. The season itself is very beautiful. It is not too hot or too cold, and by the influence of the moon all kinds of flowers bloom. In the early evening, the sun sets, and the full moon casts red rays on his dear one, the personification of the eastern direction. Our commentators have said that when Kṛṣṇa saw the moon, He remembered, “Oh, yes. We are members of the Candra (moon) dynasty, and the original head of the Candra dynasty is this very Candra whom I see now. Tonight the indication has arisen in My heart that the eastern direction is really the wife of Sūrya, the sun. I am similarly applying colour to the faces of the *gopīs*, meaning that I am enjoying amorous pastimes with them, and in this there is no fault, especially since I am actually the husband of the entire world.”

Seeing the moon, this inspiration arose in Him. At that time He remembered that a boon had been given to the *gopīs* who had been performing austerities for millions of births, and it was *pūrṇimā*, the full moon and the last day of the month for *pūjā*. They were new *gopīs*, young girls, and they gave invitations to Rādhikā, Viśākhā, Lalitā and all of the *gopīs* of Vraja-maṇḍala: “Today please come and join us in our *pūjā*.” So on that day when their worship was to be completed, Rādhikā, Viśākhā and Lalitā joined them, but they didn’t participate in the worship. Why? Because they had already been married, so for them there was no necessity of saying, “We desire to have the son of Nanda as our husband.” But all of them were present there, and on that

very day Kṛṣṇa took their clothes and gave them all a boon. He thought, “Today, I will fulfil the desires of their hearts.”

He played His flute, and when all of the *gopīs* came there, He said, “I have already had *darśana* of all of you, so now please return home. Your duty is to serve your husbands.”

The *gopīs* replied, “Who in this world can be a *guru* like You? You are our *gurudeva*. There is no instruction as beautiful as that which you have just given us. Telling us to serve our husbands – there is no greater instruction than this, so then You are our *guru*. Previously we were offering *pūjā* to Kātyāyanī, and now we have attained Your service, so You are our *gurudeva*. Therefore accept the *pūjā* we offered before, and if You don’t, then You are not fulfilling Your words, and the reaction to committing *aparādha* will come upon You.

*ye yathā mām prapadyante
tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham*

Bhagavad-gītā (4.11)

“As they surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly’ – these are Your words. Please fulfil the desires of our worship. To You we have only brought ourselves; we have nothing more to offer You, so please be happy. Before, in our *pūjā*, we offered dried fruit, rock candy and sweets – whatever we had, we offered to Kātyāyanī in our *pūjā*, but in reality it was all meant for You. Please accept it, otherwise You are not fulfilling Your words.”

Kṛṣṇa could not defeat them with words. In his description of *āścarya-rāsa*, Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī has shown these things a little differently. He has written that on that day Kṛṣṇa called through the flute, “Rādhe! Rādhe!” and each of the *gopīs* thought, “He is calling my name!”

jagau kalam vāma-dṛśām manoharam

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.29.3)

The meaning of this is very beautiful. *Jagau* means “played”, and *manoharam* means “he who steals the heart”. He played His flute in such a way as to steal the attention of the whole world, and all the *gopīs* became automatically attracted. Kṛṣṇa, by His beauty, by His qualities, by His affection, by His *rasa* and by all the other specialities of His style, stole the hearts of all living entities. He sent a messenger from house to house. How did He send it? By His lips, through the medium of His flute, all the *rasa* of His heart was expressed in His calling of the *gopīs*. The wood of the flute, bamboo, is generally dry, but He injected it with *rasa*. He gave a little blow into the flute, and from it came a very peculiar vibration, the likes of which He could not have made with His mouth alone.

Emerging from the flute, the vibration saw that in the entire universe there was no fit receptacle for it, so it crossed over the entire material universe (*brahmāṇḍa*). Going up from there, it also crossed Vaikuṇṭha, and even crossed Mathurā and Dvārakā. Entering Vraja this sweet vibration stunned and bewildered everyone, and put them to sleep. All of the older ladies of Vraja became unconscious and knew nothing of what was happening. The *sakhīs* also remained sleeping. Then, for making the *gopīs* give themselves to Kṛṣṇa, that vibration arrived at their ears and saw that the door was open. Coming across an open door, it immediately entered through the medium of their ears, and came to the most valuable of all things: their hearts. The patience of the heart, the fear and shyness towards *guru* – whatever was there, it plundered everything. And only when it was leaving did the *gopīs* come to know of it and say, “Where have our hearts gone?” They saw that a thief had come and is going away, where? In the direction from which that vibration came, so they ran there.

When I joined the mission, there was an older *brahmacārī* who would sit in the corner and chant *japa*, facing the wall so that

nothing would distract him. Every day he would chant one *lākṣha* of *harināma*. One day while he was sitting quietly and chanting, he heard a noise, and not fully to his external senses, he looked to one side and saw a thief escaping with a money box. As he got up to pursue the thief, his *dhōtī* began to fall down, so he clutched it with one hand. With the other hand he was still taking *harināma* – he didn’t leave his *harināma*! In this very state, with one hand on his chanting beads and the other hand holding up his *dhōtī*, yelling “Thief! Thief!” he ran after him. Then his foot got caught in his *dhōtī* and he almost fell! At that time he was not completely to his external senses, so how could he catch the thief? He couldn’t catch him, but he ran after him in that condition anyway. Finally more people came and the thief was caught.

At the time when Kṛṣṇa played the flute, the *gopīs* were in a similar condition. It was early evening. One *gopī* was serving her husband, another was milking a cow, another was cooling milk by pouring it from one vessel to another, another was decorating herself, and others were doing other things. So when the thief comes, if there is a delay of even one moment, it won’t be possible to catch him. Therefore the *gopīs* immediately ran after Him. Some had applied make-up to only one eye, and the remainder was in their hands as they left. Others, in a bewildered state, dressed themselves in a disorderly fashion, and as they went, their clothes were dragging on the ground. Not fully externally aware, they arrived in the arena of *rāsa*. This is called *śārādīya-rāsa*.

During that *rāsa*, Kṛṣṇa’s dearest *gopī* exhibited some jealous anger. Kṛṣṇa was thinking, “I am enjoying with so many *gopīs*; no one is as fortunate as Me.” But this *gopī* thought, “All are equal to Me? He told Me that I was the dearest to Him, and here I see that He is a liar. He is dancing and singing with everyone.” Therefore She exhibited *māna*, jealous anger. Then Kṛṣṇa grabbed

Her and disappeared on the path. The *gopīs* began searching. Searching and searching, they saw a pair of footprints, and along with them was the footprint of some *kīśorī*. One group of *gopīs* understood whose footprint that was, but the *sakhīs* in the mood of Candrāvalī didn't understand whose it was.

*anayārādhito nūnam
bhagavān harir īśvaraḥ
yan no vihāya govindaḥ
prīto yām anayad rahaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.30.28)

The *gopīs* thought, “Certainly this particular *gopī* has worshipped Śrī Govinda the best, therefore He has left us and taken only Her with Him.” Those who were servants of that *gopī* recognised Her footprint, and were very, very happy. “Today the Lord has taken our *sakhī* and vanished!” As they went further and further, these *gopīs* felt increasing *ānanda*, but the others were feeling separation. “We see that Her footprints stop here – where has She gone? Definitely that *gopī* had become tired, and therefore He lifted Her up and carried Her on His shoulders.”

When they went a little further ahead, the *gopīs* noticed a place on the ground where someone had been sitting, and near it some flowers had fallen. There were also some toe-prints on the ground. “It seems that here Kṛṣṇa has stood on His toes to pick flowers, so here He has certainly decorated Her with them.” They went a little further ahead and saw that very *sakhī*, alone and lamenting, and some said, “Oh, it was *this sakhī* Kṛṣṇa had taken with Him!” Seeing Her crying and crying, the other *gopīs* felt some sympathy for Her. Leaving Her behind, Kṛṣṇa had gone on His way; otherwise they would have been jealous of Her.

There are so many beautiful things described there in Chapters 29–33 of the Tenth Canto. In the end, they again met Kṛṣṇa. He appeared before them, a little ashamed, and said, “*Sakhīs*, I am

certainly very grateful to you.” They put a question about loving reciprocation to Him, and His answer was very beautiful. Here we complete our summary of *śārādīya-rāsa*.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Rāya Rāmānanda, Svarūpa Dāmodara and Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita were together at the Ratha-yātrā festival. It was the day of Herā-pañcamī. At that time, in a drama that was being enacted for the Lord’s pleasure, Śrīvāsa saw that the maid-servants of Lakṣmī-devī had arrested the *gopīs* and were harassing them. As a form of taxation they were snatching their ornaments and punishing them. Very happily they were playing horns, laughing and saying, “Hey cowherds, you work only with milk, and you want to be equal to Lakṣmī-devī, the goddess of fortune? Today she will teach you a good lesson!”

They were taking some of the *gopīs*’ clothing and beating them with that, and taking some taxation from them. Seeing all of this, Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita was very pleased, and said, “Just see! What is there in Vṇḍāvana? The garlands there are composed merely of *guñjā* flowers. Where would they get good quality ornaments? All they have are these ornaments made of flowers, and they are wearing these things. Their opulence is petty in comparison to the massive opulence of Lakṣmī.”

Then Svarūpa Dāmodara said, “What is the nature of the *gopīs*’ ankle bracelets? They are more valuable than the diamonds on Lakṣmī-devī’s head. Only these simple flowers are necessary for them to attract Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Since nothing else is necessary, their opulence is the highest.” In this way he described the greatness of the *gopīs*.

Mahāprabhu said, “He is correct. I agree that the *prema* of the *gopīs* is the highest of all – it is even higher than that of Lakṣmī. And amongst all of the *gopīs* who is the best?”

Svarūpa Dāmodara replied, “Rādhikā. Rādhikā’s *prema* is the most advanced of all.”

“How?”

“In the *rāsa-līlā*, Kṛṣṇa left all others and vanished, taking only Her. He took Her in a deceptive way.”

“Why with deception?”

“Because He was afraid of the other *gopīs*. If He had taken Her in front of everyone, then perhaps Candrāvalī and the others would have become jealous of Rādhikā’s love.”

Mahāprabhu said, “We don’t want to hear about Him stealing Her. Because the name of the particular *gopī* that He took is not mentioned in the *Bhāgavatam*, it could have been Candrāvalī or any other *gopī*. Please tell us how Kṛṣṇa directly considers Rādhā only to be the best.”

Here we turn to Jayadeva’s description of *vasantī-rāsa*: “My heart is palpitating, for I desire to write such a thing which in this life I have not written before, and which is not mentioned anywhere: that Kṛṣṇa will fall at the feet of Rādhikā. We know it well, but Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Controller, the cause of all causes, and the source of all other incarnations. That He falls at the feet of His own potency who is the form of His maidservant – I don’t know if this is proper, but my heart is saying that without Kṛṣṇa putting His head at Her feet, She will not be appeased! I don’t know if I am able to write it.”

Jayadeva goes on to describe that on the plains of Girirāja-Govardhana, at Candra-sarovara, Candra remained throughout the whole of one of Brahmā’s nights. What is the duration of Brahmā’s night? Millions of *yugas*. In order to witness the *rāsa-līlā* he stayed there, so it is called Candra-sarovara.

In the spring season, all of the fruits and flowers in Vṛndāvana come out. The she-cuckoo starts her *kū-kū* sound, the peacock starts his *ke-kā* sound, and it is as if the pigeons are playing the conchshell, making their *ko-ko* sounds. They are all making their own sounds, and collectively it sounds as if they are playing

a *śahanāī*. In this way all of the birds and animals become happy, and there is no one who is not dancing. Forming groups, Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* start dancing. All young unmarried girls are present there, and they had been waiting for one year. For dancing with Kṛṣṇa, for meeting Kṛṣṇa – for a whole year a fire of separation had been burning inside them. Not for themselves, not for lust, but for mitigating this separation.

For really becoming immersed in Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa*, one must enter into this poetry composed by Jayadeva Gosvāmī. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu, His heart full of *rāsa*, at night would tell Svarūpa Dāmodara, "Please recite *Gīta-govinda* for Me." Hearing it, immediately His pleasure would increase. Svarūpa Dāmodara would read precisely what Caitanya Mahāprabhu desired to hear. Sometimes it was the poetry of Jayadeva, sometimes Caṇḍīdāsa, sometimes Vidyāpati, and sometimes he would read verses from the five chapters describing the *rāsa* dance in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

The *gopīs* were clapping their hands as if they were *karatālas*, and they played drums, the *vīṇā* and the *sitāra*. It was divinely beautiful as the *gopīs* played one *rāga* after another. There are some melodies in which there is no *rāsa*, so they played only the *rāgas* that increased the *rāsa*. Kṛṣṇa sang in a very high pitch, and in different melodies. The *gopīs* then sang one song in a higher pitch than Kṛṣṇa. He wanted to sing higher, but couldn't, and He could only say, "*Sādhū! Sādhū!* (Very nice! Very nice!)" Kṛṣṇa was dancing, and with Śrīmatī Rādhikā, He danced with such speed and dexterity that He Himself was astonished, and again He chanted, "*Sādhū! Sādhū!*"

With one *gopī* Kṛṣṇa was holding hands, with another He was dancing by jumping up and down, another He was embracing, and another He was kissing on the hand. Sometimes, with His eyes half-open in great *prema*, He would look in the direction of

a particular *gopī*. He would follow a certain rhythm of racing behind one *gopī* after another, and this is how *vasantī-rāsa* is described.

In a fraction of a second, as short as the blink of the eyes, thousands more *gopīs* arrived and started dancing. Rādhikā saw that at that time Kṛṣṇa's topmost, supremely powerful potency (*param-aīśvarya-śakti*) was not working; He had stopped it. Here He kept the cause behind pastimes, Yogamāyā, separate from Him. He placed all of these potencies far away by telling them, "At this time you will not do anything; for now you just sit quietly and watch." In this pastime of Kṛṣṇa, everything was forgotten. Here, because *aīśvarya* was not manifest, Kṛṣṇa didn't know that "I am Bhagavān," and the *gopīs* didn't know that "We are Īśvarī, we are the root of Yogamāyā." All was forgotten.

After a little while, Rādhikā saw, "Kṛṣṇa is a big cheater. He is cheating Me. He seems to be dancing only with Me, but actually He is dancing with everyone. Only because of His speed and dexterity does it seem that He is alone with Me."

Then Rādhikā exhibited some *māna*, jealous anger. If we feel this emotion, there is some selfishness in it, but in the hearts of devotees there is no selfishness. In Her heart there is never any envy, but even if there is some, it is only a transformation of *prema* and *mahābhāva*. Don't consider this to be a deformation, but rather an aspect of Her variegatedness, Her speciality.

There is milk: add some sugar, and it becomes sweet. Mix a little *kevrā*, then a little camphor and other things, and it becomes more and more sweet and tasteful. Like this Rādhikā has Her own uniqueness, and for making Kṛṣṇa even happier, She exhibited some *māna*. She left the *rāsa* dance and went to a *kuñja*, but then what happened? Upon arriving there She felt remorse and thought, "Why did I leave Kṛṣṇa's association? He didn't

leave Me; I left Him. If there is any unfortunate woman, it is Me. There is no one as unfortunate as Me.”

Meanwhile Kṛṣṇa met one *sakhī* and requested her, “Please go to Rādhā and tell Her that Kṛṣṇa is saying, ‘I am very unhappy for You. In the future I will never do such a thing as I did again, and You will always be happy. Please forgive Me.’”

The *sakhī* went to Rādhikā and seeing Her condition said, “Why are You behaving like this? Leaving Kṛṣṇa, You came here. He tried to please You, but You wouldn’t accept it, so why are You upset?” Just then Lalitā appeared there and said, “Kṛṣṇa is a liar! Don’t trust Him! Don’t ever reveal Your simplicity to Him! Remain crooked, otherwise You won’t be able to have straightforward dealings with Him! He will never understand Your value, so always remain crooked.”

The *sakhī* tried in many ways to pacify Rādhikā, but She would not be appeased. When the *sakhī* returned to Kṛṣṇa and told Him this, He said, “Somehow I must appease Her.” Then Kṛṣṇa thought He would play a joke to appease Her. Pretending to be very unhappy, His face became withered and saying, “Now I am going!” He left there and hid in a nearby *kuñja*. Then some *sakhīs* followed behind Him whispering, “Where is He going? Let us see.”

He entered a *kuñja* and laid down amongst some large rocks. Seeing Him lie down, the *sakhīs* returned to Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Lalitā, Viśākhā and the others, and told them, “He has gone to a nearby *kuñja*. Being very unhappy and in pain from Your separation, He was not able to go any further, and He has fallen asleep.”

They said, “Where?” The *sakhīs* then led Rādhikā and the others to the *kuñja*. They peered into the entrance of the *kuñja* and saw that His face was covered. They couldn’t tell if He was crying, or sleeping, or what He was doing. Then, moving closer,

they saw that He was sleeping. His eyes were closed, and His face was a little covered. The *gopīs* exchanged hand signals, because at that time, their supreme enemy, the flute, was hanging loosely in His hand! They thought that they should take it. They did not consider for a moment that they might be entering a trap, but just that they should take it.

Then Rādhikā said, “Yes, we should take it, but who will do it? Who will tie the bell around the cat’s neck? Who will take the responsibility of snatching the flute from His hand? Friends, this is not a simple thing! His hand is like a snake. If someone approaches and tries to take the flute, the snake will bite him, give its ‘poison’, and it will never leave him! Therefore who will dare to try?”

All of them thought together, and concluded that it would not be possible for anyone except Śrīmatī Rādhikā, so She said, “If all of you insist, then certainly I will try.”

Very, very slowly, just as a cat does, She crept closer. Walking very slowly and stealthily, smiling slightly and watching Him, She went closer. But what was Kṛṣṇa doing? He had heard everything that they had discussed amongst themselves, and feeling that He should enjoy Himself a little, He thought, “If Rādhā is to be appeased, there must be some direct conversation between us. But there has not been such an opportunity. Therefore I will let the flute be taken, and then I will see how I can talk to Rādhā. I will ask each of them, ‘Where did you put My flute?’ and in the course of asking all of them, I will necessarily come to Rādhā, and then I will get the chance. It will be a moment of great happiness!”

Hence Kṛṣṇa allowed His hand to become slack. Thinking Him to be asleep, slowly Rādhikā crept near to Him and saw that He was apparently deeply asleep. When someone is sleeping lightly, they can be easily awakened, but when someone is in deep sleep, you cannot easily awaken them. Kṛṣṇa appeared to be

sleeping like that. Quickly She snatched the flute from His hand, and at once the *gopīs* ran from the *kuñja*. As they were all running with their long hair swinging to and fro, Kṛṣṇa opened His eyes, saying, “Hari, Hari... hey, where has My flute gone?” He ran outside the *kuñja* and said to the *gopīs*, “You have stolen My flute!”

He said to each *gopī*, “Did you take it?” until He came to Rādhā. She replied, “What will I do with this useless piece of bamboo? Yes, I took it, and I will burn it also! It is only one piece of bamboo. In our garden we have thousands of sticks of bamboo, so what is the big deal about only one piece of bamboo? You can come and cut thousands and take them!” In this way they were mutually joking, but they didn’t realise that Kṛṣṇa was knowingly joking with them.

Still Rādhikā was not appeased, although internally She desired to meet Kṛṣṇa. He had already seen that sending a messenger would not do it, so what did He do next? He Himself expanded into Śyāmalī Sakhī. Assuming a very beautiful form, she approached the *gopīs* with a basket of flowers in her hand, and in a sweet voice called out, “By rendering service to someone, I will mitigate all of their distress and fatigue, and they will become very happy.”

At that time Rādhikā and the *sakhīs* were feeling fatigued and unhappy. Seeing Śyāmalī, really Rādhikā did not recognise this *sakhī* as Kṛṣṇa Himself, and Lalitā, Viśākhā and the others also did not recognise Him. When Kṛṣṇa assumes another form, who will recognise Him? Even when an ordinary actor changes dress, we cannot understand who it is. For this purpose He employed Yogamāyā, and therefore no one could recognise Him.

Śyāmalī pleased Rādhikā by giving Her a flower garland that emanated a special fragrance. Rādhikā thought, “Where has this

fragrance come from? Whose fragrance is this?” Knowing it to be related to Kṛṣṇa, She was very pleased.

Śyāmālī began saying to Rādhikā, “In this world, there is no one who is as kind, who has as many good qualities, who shows respect to everyone, who is as grateful and who is as expert in all sixty-four arts as Kṛṣṇa is. What to speak of just in Vṛndāvana, in the entire *brahmāṇḍa* there is no one equal to Him. And You? You have so many good qualities and You are so beautiful, so towards Him You should not commit any offence.”

Praising Kṛṣṇa like this, and praising Rādhā like this, Śyāmālī proved that Kṛṣṇa was not at fault. Rādhikā was fully appeased, and in the end for Her ultimate happiness, the final weapon was in His hand. Having returned to His original form, He said to Rādhikā, “In Me there is a fire of separation, and only the touch of Your feet can cool it. Therefore be merciful and decorate My head with Your feet, because by doing so You will also become happy.”

Being pleased, Rādhikā said, “Now agree to one thing. The flower bracelets on My feet are broken; please rearrange them. And My hair plait has become loose; please tie it.”

Seeing that He had followed Her every order, She thought, “He has obeyed all of My orders very nicely. He will never go to another *gopī*. Come, let there be *rāsa*.” At that time, the *rāsa-līlā* was performed at Candra-sarovara, and this is how *vasantī-rāsa* is described in *Gīta-govinda*.

Although we do not have the qualification to engage in *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* of this topic, in brief we have tried to describe this *rāsa* and what sentiments of love came in it. Tasting and tasting this, just see how the condition of Mahāprabhu became! It was a wonderful thing! Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāya Rāmānanda would describe it to Him. I am only an ordinary person full of *anarthas*,

but in that place where Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāya Rāmānanda are describing this, Kṛṣṇa Himself, full of *rādhā-bhāva*, will be there as a listener in the form of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and He receives so much *ānanda* from it. Therefore we will silently remember this *vasantī-rāsa*, and when one day genuine spiritual greed arises in our hearts, we will be able to directly serve this *rāsa*.

Chapter Five

Niśānta-bhajana

(1)

The daily pastimes of Bhagavān are divided into eight parts, and the period from three o'clock in the morning until the rising of the sun is called *niśānta-līlā*. It is the end (*anta*) of the night (*niśā*). When the living entity begins performing *bhajana* it is like the rising of the sun. The *jīva* has been averse to Bhagavān since time immemorial, and due to this mentality he wanders through eighty-four *lākhas* of species.

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

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 20.117)

Forgetting Kṛṣṇa, the living entity has been attracted by *māyā* since time immemorial. Therefore *māyā* gives him all kinds of misery in his material existence.

*kṛṣṇa-bahirmukha hañā bhoga-vāñchā kare
nikāṭa-stha māyā tāre jāpaṭiyā dhare*

Prema-vivarta

When the living entity becomes averse to Bhagavān, Māyā-devī pounces on him and arrests him.

*bhayaṁ dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syād
īśād apetasya viparyayo 'smṛtiḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.2.37)

Misunderstanding himself to be a product of the material energy, the living entity becomes overwhelmed with fear. Deceived by *māyā*, his position becomes reversed – instead of being the servant of Bhagavān, he becomes opposed to Him.

Bhagavān's Mahāmāyā is of two types: *āvaraṇātmikā-māyā*, which covers the conditioned soul, and *vikṣepātmikā-māyā*, which arrests the conditioned soul and casts him into the eighty-four *lākhas* of species. The first covers the *jīva* with a material physical body and with a subtle body composed of mind, intelligence and false ego. By identifying himself with these gross material coverings, the internal identity (*svarūpa*) of the living entity becomes covered. But it is erroneous to think that when Kṛṣṇa comes to this world His *svarūpa* also becomes covered. The clouds do not cover the sun, but they can obstruct our vision so that we are unable to see the sun. But if we go up in an airplane, we can then see that the sun is actually shining and that the clouds are situated below it. The clouds are limited, whereas the sky is unlimited, and just as the clouds cannot cover the unlimited sky, *māyā* cannot cover Kṛṣṇa. Where there is Kṛṣṇa, there is no *māyā*. There, ashamed, she remains standing behind Him and is unable to do anything.

But Bhagavān is so merciful that He descends to the material realm in the form of Paramātmā and is always present in the heart of the *jīva* as the witness. He watches over us and looks for any pretext to bring us back to Him. He is always there in the heart of the living entity watching and waiting for such a good opportunity. He is very merciful, but not just merciful; He is the intimate friend of the *jīva*. He knows all about how we can acquire our ultimate good fortune.

When the living entity becomes opposed to Bhagavān and *māyā* pounces on him, some desires arise in his heart. After fulfilling these desires, he realises that, "All of this is actually not happiness

after all.” A baby sees fire, and thinking that it appears very pleasing, gets up to touch it, but his mother says, “If you touch the fire you’ll be burnt.” So she forbids him and takes him in her lap. But he won’t listen and jumps out of her lap to try again, so what will she do then? She grabs his hand and touches it momentarily to the fire, and upon feeling the burning sensation, the baby pulls his hand away. Never again will he go near the fire. In the same way that Bhagavān is very merciful, Māyā-devī is also very merciful. Allowing the *jīva* to enjoy and helping him to attain what he desires until the *jīva* realises, “In reality this is poisonous!”, Bhagavān then begins to bring the *jīva* towards Himself.

*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 19.151)

It is the immense good fortune of the living entity that Bhagavān comes to him in the forms of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. He sends the *guru* to him, and sends the Vaiṣṇavas to him, and through them the seed of the creeper of devotion is planted in the *jīva*’s heart. As long as we do not have this seed of *bhakti*, for us it is still *niśā*, night.

*yā niśā sarva-bhūtānām
tasyām jāgarti saṁyamī
yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni
sā niśā paśyato muneh*

Bhagavad-gītā (2.69)

When *sādhus* and Vaiṣṇavas are awake, it is night for worldly people, and what is day for worldly people is night for the *sādhū*. Those that have been arrested by *māyā* are asleep to everything related to Bhagavān, and the *sādhus* that are awake to Bhagavān are asleep to the enjoying spirit of worldly people. Therefore, for those not engaged in *bhajana*, it is *niśā*, night. They are trapped in the night of sense enjoyment. When the night is coming to an

end it is called *niśānta*, and what brings about the end of the conditioned soul's night?

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

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.25.25)

In the company of Vaiṣṇavas, *hari-kathā* is very tasteful to the ears and heart. By this process one progresses very quickly on the devotional path and will attain *śraddhā*, *rati* and *bhakti* in sequence.

What is the first sign that the night of the *jīvas*' enjoying spirit is coming to an end? One attains the association of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, and then comes to Vṛndāvana, where day and night *hari-kathā* is being spoken. So when the conditioned soul meets a real *sādhū*, who can give causeless mercy, then it appears that the night of his wandering through eighty-four *lākhas* of species is coming to an end, and daybreak is coming. The darkness of *māyā* will be dissipated, and this is called *niśānta-bhajana*.

It is compared to the time when the night is completed and symptoms of daybreak begin to appear. The peacock makes the *ke-kā* sound, and the sparrows begin making the *chā-chā* sound. The birds' *chā-chā* sound is like the devotees relishing *hari-kathā*, and the *ke-kā* sound indicates that having accepted initiation (*dīkṣā*) from a spiritual master, the stars that were so luminous during the night – meaning the attraction for sense enjoyment, which until now was shining for the conditioned soul – are no longer visible. The eastern horizon begins to turn red, and now we understand that the night has come to an end, meaning that the conditioned soul's wandering in the material world will soon come to an end. This is *niśānta-bhajana*, and is the dawning of *śraddhā*, faith. And where does this faith come from? The thing

which gives *śraddhā* to the heart of a *jīva* and moves him in the direction of liberation and *bhakti* more than anything else is *sādhū-saṅga*, keeping company with saintly persons. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself especially came in the dress of a devotee and went door to door giving the holy name.

*yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa
āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei deśa*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 7.128)

Tell everyone you meet the instructions of Kṛṣṇa. Under My order become a *guru* and deliver everyone in this land.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu went from door to door telling the the living entities, “I went to My *guru* and he told Me, ‘Study Vedānta!’ But I said, ‘Gurudeva, I am a big fool. There is no other fool like Me in this world, so how will I study Vedānta? Please be merciful and tell Me an easier method.’

“Then My *gurudeva* said, ‘Alright. I see that You are unqualified to study Vedānta. Then just remember this verse:

*harer nāma harer nāma
harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva
nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

Bṛhan-nāradiya Purāṇa

“By chanting the holy name You will attain Your ultimate good. Besides this there is no other way, no other way, no other way.” Saying it once was not enough – he said it three times. Why? To make our firm faith arise in *harināma*: “Definitely you will receive your highest good fortune by this!” If he had not said it like this, would we have any faith in the holy name? Besides *harināma* there is no other way to attain happiness and peace of mind and cross over the ocean of material existence. To make faith arise in the hearts of the living entities, Mahāprabhu has given this verse.

Suppose a man is sleeping. How will you awaken him? By calling him: “Hey, get up!” Similarly, loudly singing *nāma-saṅkīrtana* acts as a mother who awakens the *jīva* who is deeply asleep in the night of illusion. And in Kali-yuga, the best of all holy names is the *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare; Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

khāite suite yathā tathā nāma laya
kāla-deśa-niyama nāhi, sarva siddhi haya

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 20.18)

By chanting it at any time or place, even while eating or lying down, the holy name gives all perfection.

When I first joined the mission, a doubt arose in me: “There are no names higher than Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Mahāprabhu would go mad by chanting ‘Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa,’ but in the *mahā-mantra* the name of Sṛīmatī Rādhikā is not given in an explicit way. Some chant ‘Rādhe Kṛṣṇa, Rādhe Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Rādhe Rādhe; Rādhe Śyāma, Rādhe Śyāma, Śyāma Śyāma, Rādhe Rādhe.’ What is the harm in that? Śyāma is a more direct name of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, and by chanting ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa’ we have to assume that ‘Hare’ means Rādhikā. Also ‘Rāma’ can refer to either the Rāma of Ayodhyā, Saṅkarṣaṇa Rāma or Balarāma. The direct name of Rādhikā is not found in the *mahā-mantra*.”

Then I went and asked my *gurudeva* and other Vaiṣṇavas also, but perhaps considering me to be unqualified to understand at that time, they merely said, “The *mahā-mantra* is *cintāmaṇi*, touchstone, and included within it is *sādhya* and *sādhana*, everything. If you need to know more, read *Jaiva-dharma* – the answer is there.”

Jaiva-dharma states that there is so much *rasa* in the *mahā-mantra* that there is no need to chant any other names. Mahāprabhu said, “I had faith in what My *gurudeva* had said, and I started chanting the holy name. After chanting and chanting, one day I saw

that very name personified standing before Me in an attractive threefold-bending posture, attired in the dress of a cowherd boy, playing the flute, smiling and looking in My direction with dancing eyebrows. Through the medium of My eyes, My heart left My body, and laughing, crying and rolling on the ground, I forgot everything.”

Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī had asked Mahāprabhu, “Why are You not studying Vedānta? Why are You crying?”

Mahāprabhu replied, “It is this holy name that makes Me sing, dance and cry. In this *mahā-mantra* there is so much *rasa*; please just hear the explanation of only one word of it. *Hare* – what is its meaning? *Harati kuñje yāḥ sā rādhikā*: Rādhikā enchants Kṛṣṇa’s mind in such a way that it steals Him away to the *kuñja*. From the word *harāṇa*, which means “to steal”, comes *harā*, which becomes *hare*. Tell Me then – how beautiful is the meaning hidden within it?”

In this way, Mahāprabhu, Rūpa Gosvāmī and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī have extracted this very beautiful meaning from the *mahā-mantra*. In the indirect form, *parokṣavāda*, there is so much *rasa* and *ānanda* that it is more than what is found in the direct form. In this way they have described the glories of the *mahā-mantra* as being limitless. The spiritual master, the Vaiṣṇavas and the scriptures make faith in this understanding arise in the heart of the living entity, and this is called *niśānta-bhajana*.

(2)

Niśānta-bhajana is of two types: one is within the realm of *sādhana*, and the other is within the realm of perfection, and is *rāgānuga-bhajana*. In *sādhana* it is the first stage of *bhakti* and is compared to the end of the night in Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā*. In Kṛṣṇa’s

pastimes, when night has passed and daybreak is dawning it is called *niśānta-līlā*. It lasts for three hours – from three o’clock until six o’clock. By the accumulation of devotional merit (*sukṛti*) we attain *sādhū-saṅga*, and when the seed of faith is planted within us, it is *niśānta-bhajana*. And as the word *niśā* means “night”, here it refers to the darkness of night when the living entity is opposed to Kṛṣṇa.

*bhavāpavargo bhramato yadā bhavej
janasya tarhy acyuta sat-samāgamah*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.51.53)

When the *jīva* attains saintly association, then this darkness of *māyā* begins to dissipate and he can understand that his night will soon be ending, meaning that his wandering through countless lifetimes in this material world will soon be finished.

*bhaktis tu bhagavad-
bhakta-saṅgena parijāyate
sat-saṅgaḥ prāpyate pumbhiḥ
sukṛtaiḥ pūrva-saṅcitaiḥ*

Bṛhan-nārādīya Purāṇa (4.33)

By the accumulation of *sukṛti*, one attains *sādhū-saṅga*, and by *sādhū-saṅga* one attains *bhakti*. But as long as one does not have resolute faith in the words of a *sādhū*, then it will not be real *sādhū-saṅga*. “I will die before I fail to follow the instructions of the *sādhū*” – this is the necessary sentiment for performing *bhajana*.

The kingdom of *sādhana-bhajana* for the living entity stretches from the beginning stage of *śraddhā* to the elevated stage of *bhāva*. In order for *śraddhā* to arise within a *jīva*, in the beginning there must be some *sukṛti* that has been acquired unknowingly. This *sukṛti* is acquired by unknowingly performing any activity related to Bhagavān or His devotees, and from the influence of this *sukṛti* one attains saintly association.

The story of Prahlāda Mahārāja illustrates this point. In his previous life he was a *brāhmaṇa*, and in his youth he was well educated and eventually married. He was adorned with all good qualities and served his parents faithfully. Once while going somewhere, by chance he fell into bad association and became attached to a prostitute. He became so attached to her that he abandoned the service of his parents, abandoned his wife and children, sold everything in his house and destroyed his household life. Stealthily he had taken whatever possessions he had to this prostitute. Then one day that prostitute saw that she had taken everything from him and that he was now penniless, so she began to ignore him. She would converse with others in his presence, but she would not speak to him and would just tell him to go away. Being very distressed, one morning he left that place and wandered and wandered all day through a jungle and became very hungry and thirsty. Then evening began to fall, and being a winter night it began to rain. He thought, “Now where will I go?” He was fearing that he might be attacked by a tiger or bear. Then he saw an old, neglected temple, so he entered it and lay down. But the discord with the prostitute was paining him like a thorn in his heart, so he was unable to sleep and all night he just cried and worried.

In another place that prostitute had repented and began searching for him. In the night she took shelter in that same temple not knowing that he was also there. She also just cried and cried and was unable to sleep. When the next morning came, they saw each other, and crying, she at once went and fell at his feet. With great affection he embraced her, and the previous incident was forgotten. They returned to their life of misconduct, but at that time no one understood what great benefit they received on that day. That day had happened to be Nṛsimha-caturdaśī, the holy appearance day of Lord Nṛsimhadeva, and all

day neither of them had drank any water or eaten anything. They had fasted all day, and had also remained awake all night, so they received the benefit of observing Nṛsimha-caturdaśī. And whose temple was it that they had stayed in that night? Nṛsimhadeva's. Unknowingly they received such a great result from this that in his next life he became Prahlāda Mahārāja, and she became his wife.

From this he attained the opportunity to hear from Nārada. When he was still in his mother's womb, he heard instructions from Nārada continuously for sixty thousand years. By the mercy of Nārada he became the great spiritual scholar and exclusive devotee of Bhagavān, Prahlāda Mahārāja. This is an example of how *sādhū-saṅga* is attained as the result of *sukṛti*, and how *bhakti* is attained as the result of that *sādhū-saṅga*.

If even unknowingly someone serves the deity, they will achieve such a great result. Then if someone knowingly constructs a temple for the deity, inaugurates the service of the deity, makes ornaments for the deity, or faithfully serves Vaiṣṇavas and hears spiritual philosophy from them sincerely, how much greater will the result be? So in the kingdom of *bhakti* this is called *niśānta-bhāva* and begins with the birth of *śraddhā*. And that faith will be in what? Not directly in Bhagavān at first, but in the words of the scriptures.

*‘śraddhā’-śabde – viśvāsa kahe sudṛḍha niścaya
kṛṣṇe bhakti kaile sarva-karma kṛta haya*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.62)

“If I just perform *bhajana* of Kṛṣṇa, then everything is accomplished.” Such a high quality type of faith is called *śraddhā*. If that *śraddhā* is placed in the words of the scriptures, in the words of the spiritual master, and in the words of the Vaiṣṇavas, then everything will come from that. “By following whatever they say, everything will be all right. Even if everything in my life is

destroyed, then let it be; I will continue executing *bhagavad-bhajana*” – this is *śraddhā*, even though there may be *anarthas* in our *bhajana*. There is *aniṣṭhita-bhakti*, unsteady devotion, and *niṣṭhita-bhakti*, firm devotion. In *aniṣṭhita-bhakti*, there are false confidence (*utsāhamayī*), sporadic endeavour (*ghana-taralā*), indecision (*vyūḍha-vikalpā*), delighting in the material facilities that come from *bhakti* (*tarāṅga-raṅgiṇī*), battling with the desires for sense pleasure (*viṣaya-saṅgarā*) and the inability to uphold vows (*niyamākṣamā*). Even though all of these may remain, if one’s faith is of good quality, then upon attaining *sādhū-saṅga* his internal nature will gradually change. When one understands that upon attaining *sādhū-saṅga* the night – meaning his conditioned state of existence – will be finished soon, his faith is of good quality.

The end of the night heralds the first of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in the daytime. The peacock is sitting in the upper part of the *kadamba* tree, and the koel is seated in the upper part of the mango tree. The parrot is seated on a branch of the pomegranate tree, and because his beak is red, he blends in with the red buds of the tree. The female parrot eats grapes, so she is sitting on the grape vine. All are ready and waiting for Vṛndā-devī to give her order, thinking, “When will Vṛndā say?” Seeing that the appropriate time has come, Vṛndā-devī gives the order to the birds, “Begin singing!” So they start making the sound *kala-rava*. What is the meaning of *kala-rava*? *Rava* means “sound”, and *kala* indicates the flute, so this sound tells Kṛṣṇa that it is time to awaken and play the flute. The koel, the hummingbird and the male and female parrots start singing and become so intoxicated by making these musical sounds that it seems Kāmadeva is blowing the conchshell. The male parrot is awakening Kṛṣṇa, and the female parrot is awakening Śrīmatī. The peacock is saying *ke*, which means “who?” He is referring to Kṛṣṇa, meaning “Who can conquer the

great mountain of Rādhikā's jealous anger, shyness and patience, which no one else can cross over?" By making this sound he is saying, "O Kṛṣṇa, please awaken!" The female peacock is making the *kā* sound, which also means "who?", meaning, "Who is it that, even though Her heart is in the form of a seedling, can overpower the mad elephant Kṛṣṇa, who is directly Parabrahma Himself? Rādhikā." Then everyone awakens and the *līlā* begins.

In this world millions of *jīvas* are sleeping, and the kindness of the spiritual master and the Vaiṣṇavas that awakens them is like a fathomless ocean. We see this in the life of Gopa-kumāra, and in the life of Vrajanātha in *Jaiva-dharma*, and in the lives of so many devotees in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Without the causeless mercy of Bhagavān, no *jīva* whosoever can be spiritually awakened. Śrīmatī Rādhikā was waiting for Gopa-kumāra to come to Her in Goloka, so She arranged for him to take birth at Govardhana. She gave him the opportunity to daily take the cows out to graze and to wander around Vraja. And She Herself sent his *guru* Jayanta to him. Finding any pretext, She made a plan to bring him to Her.

In the same way the spiritual master and the Vaiṣṇavas are supremely merciful. If they see that one's *sukṛti* is not strong, they somehow arrange that his *sukṛti* will be strengthened. For those who already have *śraddhā*, they strengthen their faith by bestowing upon them the gift of their own company. If they see that someone has no desire for *bhakti*, they arrange for them to hear *hari-kathā*. A *paramahansa* Vaiṣṇava – who is qualified to cross the upper limit of the *madhyama-adhikāra* stage – a topmost Vaiṣṇava who is *nindādi-sūnya*, free from the tendency to criticise others, will cry and be so upset for us. In the same way that Kṛṣṇa cries and is upset for us, so the spiritual master and the Vaiṣṇavas are so upset for us that we cannot possibly estimate it. The *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas suffer so much for us, just like a mother when

she is raising her small child. At night the mother is sleeping, and the baby's crying awakens her. Then the child passes stool and cries even more. Will the poor woman be able to sleep? She undergoes so much suffering and difficulty in the upbringing of her child, and the father knows little of it. Only the mother can fully know it.

Similarly, the spiritual master and the Vaiṣṇavas are supremely merciful. Making different plans they make *śraddhā* arise in others and then always try to strengthen that faith. Their first duty towards us is to awaken our faith in the holy name, the *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas, and this is *niśānta-bhajana*. If someone is to begin performing *bhajana*, then for the welfare of their faith they must understand one thing: that Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān, and especially that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself. This must be understood first – that Mahāprabhu gave His everything to the *jīvas*, whereas Kṛṣṇa did not give as much. Kṛṣṇa came in the form of Mahāprabhu with the *bhāva* of Rādhikā – what is the meaning? We are not referring here to the three sentiments described in this verse (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 1.6)*):

*śrī-rādhāyāḥ prañaya-mahimā kīdṛśo vānayaivā-
svādyo yenādbhuta-madhurimā kīdṛśo vā madīyaḥ
saukhyam cāsyā mad-anubhavataḥ kīdṛśam veti lobhāt
tad-bhāvāḍhyāḥ samajani śacī-garbha-sindhau harīnduḥ*

Desiring to understand the glory of Rādhikā's love, the wonderful qualities in Him that She alone relishes through Her love, and the happiness She feels when She realises the sweetness of His love, Śrī Hari, richly endowed with Her emotions, appeared from the womb of Śrīmatī Śacī-devī as the moon appears from the ocean.

These three sentiments of Rādhikā can be explained to a new devotee at a later stage. Here the *bhāva* of Rādhikā that we mean is the sentiment of loving kindness for the living entities. Is this sentiment of mercy found more in Kṛṣṇa or in Rādhikā? More in

Rādhikā, and She is the one who, like a mother, nurtures us. Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the one who is the very personification of kindness for us, and Her manifestation in this world is the spiritual master. All of the kindness of Bhagavān is found in the *guru*.

saṁsāra-dāvānala-liḍha-loka
trāṇāya kārunya-ghanāghanatvam

Śrī Gurvaṣṭakam (1)

The spiritual master showers his kindness upon the living entities, who are suffering in the burning fire of material existence.

All of Bhagavān's kindness appears in the forms of the *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas. And what instruction do they give first? That Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came as the original *guru* of Kali-yuga to teach *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. That He came with the sentiment of a devotee to give *bhakti*. He didn't come in the form of Bhagavān; He won't give *bhakti* in that form. He will taste it as Bhagavān, but in what form will He give it? As a devotee. Without becoming a devotee, without becoming the *āśraya*, then how could He give the *viṣaya*, *kṛṣṇa-prema*? Kṛṣṇa is the only real *viṣaya* of *prema* in all of existence, so He Himself would be unable to give it. Śrī Rādhā and all other devotees are the *āśraya* of *prema*, so they can give it. Therefore Kṛṣṇa Himself came taking the *bhāva* of Rādhā, here the word *bhāva* meaning *karuṇa*, kindness.

anarpita-carim cirāt karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śriyam

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 1.4)

With this *karuṇa*, for the purpose of tasting three sentiments and for giving instruction to the souls of this world, He came. And this is His first instruction:

*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
 tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ
 etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
 durdaivam īdrśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ*

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka (2)

O Bhagavān, Your name is the giver of all auspiciousness to the *jīvas*, and therefore, being merciful, You are eternally manifest in the form of names like Rāma, Nārāyaṇa, Mukunda, Mādhava, Govinda, Dāmodara and others. You have invested all of your potency in these names. Being causelessly merciful You have not imposed any restrictions upon the chanting of Your names such as any specified time or place, and therefore they can be chanted at any time of the day or night. O Lord, this is Your causeless mercy upon the living entities, but it is my great misfortune that due to my offences, attraction for Your name, which is the bestower of all spiritual fruits, has not arisen within me.

This is His first instruction: the holy name is Kṛṣṇa Himself. There is an incident from the time of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and Śrīla Lokanātha Gosvāmī concerning this point. Once when Narottama was chanting *japa*, a farmer approached him asking for a pail of water. Not understanding the full glories of *nāma*, the holy name – that it is non-different from *nāmī*, the possessor of the holy name, in all respects – he put aside his chanting beads to perform this charitable activity. Lokanātha Gosvāmī, knowing that *nāma* and *nāmī* are one and the same and that service to the holy name is service to Kṛṣṇa, detected a fault in Narottama Ṭhākura. There is no difference between them. In the stage of practice and in perfection the holy name *is* Kṛṣṇa.

Chanting the holy name more and more, Mahāprabhu said, “I saw Kṛṣṇa in the form of Gopāla standing before Me.” The holy name and Kṛṣṇa Himself are non-different, as Mahāprabhu has said in this verse from the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. Bhagavān descended as an

incarnation in the form of so many names – why? Because there are many different types of people in the world. Their proclivities and faith are of many types. Their previously acquired natures are different, and even in perfection their internal *svarūpas* are different. Therefore Bhagavān has descended in the forms of many different names. He has so many names like Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa, Brahman, Paramātmā, Jagannātha, and also Īśvara, Allah, Khudā and God. But we can divide all of these names into two categories: secondary and primary. Names where there is no specification are secondary, like Īśvara. What is the meaning of Īśvara? In this name is there a particular form or shape specified? Just that He is the controller, but there is no specification. And *om* can mean Kālī or Gaurī, but does not specify any particular form. And Jagannātha – who does that refer to? All incarnations of Viṣṇu can be called Jagannātha. God is also a secondary name. “G” stands for generator, meaning creator, “o” stands for operator, meaning the one who maintains and nurtures, and “d” stands for destroyer. Allah means He who is the greatest of all, just like our conception of Brahman. It is also a secondary name. Hari means one who steals the consciousness, and is a primary name of Kṛṣṇa. It can also refer to Narahari and Rāmacandra along with Kṛṣṇa – these are the three superior (*parāvasthā*) incarnations.

Nṛsiṃha, Vāmana, Kalki, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa and Hari are all primary names. Primary names are also of two types. Those names which refer to Bhagavān’s aspect of divine opulence (*aśvarya*) are the secondary primary names, and the names of Kṛṣṇa are the main primary names. Then there is some further consideration within the names of Kṛṣṇa. According to the gradation of importance of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, there is gradation in His names also. Of the names Rāsa-bihārī and Yaśodā-nandana, which name is more special? Rāsa-bihārī. In this way, within the main primary names are supremely primary names like

Rādhānātha, Rādhā-kānta and Gopīnātha. They contain some special potency and indicate a special pastime of Kṛṣṇa. For instance, all of His unique sweetness (*mādhurya*) is included within the name Rāsa-bihārī, and of all Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, this name indicates the essence of them. By chanting this name these particular pastimes will be illuminated within the heart of the chanter.

There are different aspects of *rāma-nāma*. It bestows liberation, and therefore has been called the *tāraka-brahma*, the sound vibration that helps one cross over *māyā*. When referring to Dāśarathi Rāma, it means the attractor of the hearts of the *jīvas* who is supremely merciful and possesses so much special affection (*bhakta-vātsalya*) for His devotees. This *rāma-nāma* bestows *prema* and *śānta-rasa*, as well as *dāsyā*, *sakhya* and *vātsalya* in partial forms. There is no difference between this name and the name of Kṛṣṇa except for some special consideration of *rasa*. But if Rāma refers to Ramayati Kṛṣṇa or Rādhā-ramaṇa, then it will take one to the highest point.

All of Bhagavān's potency has been invested in these names – such is His mercy. Who is the first giver of faith? Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and His associates also. And who directly delivers us? Our initiating spiritual master gives us all of this, and our instructing spiritual master (*śikṣā-guru*) also gives us this. So first of all we are indebted to them, and then after them we are indebted to Mahāprabhu and His associates, even though Mahāprabhu was the origin. First we put our faith in the *guru*, and then we put our faith in Mahāprabhu, because Mahāprabhu will not accept our devotion if we bypass the *guru*.

Therefore He has said *nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis*: all of His potencies have been invested within these names, and they differ according to the particular name. And no strict rules have been imposed on the chanting of His names. Suppose

someone is seated facing south and saying the *gāyatrī-mantra* – is this correct, or not? No, because a rule (*niyama*) has been imposed on chanting *gāyatrī*. But if someone sits to chant the holy name facing south, will there be any harm? No consideration of time or place has been imposed on the chanting of *harināma*. Mahāprabhu said that even while eating and resting we should take *harināma*. Will we sit to chant *gāyatrī* or to perform *arcana* with contaminated hands? No, because it will be *aparādha*, an offence. But sometimes when we sneeze, we say “Hari, Hari”, and when we stumble over something we say “Rāma, Rāma”, and there is no fault in this because in the chanting of the holy name there are no such considerations of time, place or qualification.

If one goes to an unclean place, he will not be able to absorb his mind in spiritual topics by any means. But if he sits in a pure place, like Sevā-kuñja, then very easily he will be able to meditate. There we can discuss these high spiritual topics, but if we go and sit in an unsuitable place, will we be able to discuss things like Rādhikā’s *niśānta-līlā*? Never. Therefore there are so many *sādhana*s, and in all of them there is such consideration, but in the chanting of the holy name there is no such consideration of time or place. While eating, lying down, with unclean hands and mouth, or in whatever condition, one can chant *harināma*. Suppose someone has become disabled and is unable to sit up. For him will a rule be imposed that he must sit up to chant *harināma*, and that he cannot chant while lying down? Suppose someone is in the latrine suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea. In that condition he won’t be able to practise meditation, perform austerities, do *yoga* or anything. Seeing his helpless condition, will we say that he cannot chant the holy name then, and that instead someone will have to come and chant in his ear, “*Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Rāma*”? Even in that condition the result will come from chanting, whereas from any other *sādhana* there would be

no benefit. Therefore first making faith in the holy name arise in someone is *niśānta-bhajana*, and concerning this Mahāprabhu said:

*harer nāma harer nāma
harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva
nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

There is no other way but chanting of the holy name, but one thing is essential – from where do we hear the glories of the holy name? From the spiritual master and the Vaiṣṇavas. Without first attaining *sādhū-saṅga* one will not be able to chant the holy name, and even if he does chant, what kind of *nāma* he is chanting will be questionable. The *nāma* that we have received from the *guru* is like a strong seed. From a strong seed a healthy plant will emerge, but a weak seed will produce nothing. Similarly, the spiritual master gives us *śabda-brahma*, transcendental sound vibration, and taking that *harināma* will produce the fruit of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. But the weak seed, which is not *śabda-brahma* and which does not have perfection inherent within it, will only produce the fruits of material enjoyment and liberation.

*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam
śreyah-kairava-candrikā-vitaranam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-vardhanam prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsādanam
sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka (1)

The first effect of the holy name is that it cleanses the mirror of the heart, the second effect is that it extinguishes the fire of misery in the forest of birth and death, the third effect is that like the rays of the moon it causes the flower of the living entities' ultimate good fortune to bloom, and the fourth effect is that it bestows the innermost transcendental knowledge, which is compared to a young bride. The fifth effect is that it increases the

ocean of transcendental pleasure, the sixth effect is that it makes us taste the highest nectar at every step, and the seventh is that it thoroughly cools and purifies us inside and out. These are the seven effects of chanting *harināma*, and after this it bestows *prema*, making eight. This gradual awakening beginning with cleansing the mirror of the heart is *niśānta-bhajana*, and after this, when one meditates with *rasika-bhāva* on the eight parts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's day, direct service to Him is attained.

Chapter Six

Śrīyā Śuka

A reason given as to why Śukadeva Gosvāmī did not directly mention Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's name in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is because Mahārāja Parīkṣit had only seven days to live, and uttering Rādhikā's name would have thrown Śukadeva into ecstatic trance for six months. In the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* it is mentioned:

*śrī-rādhā-nāma-mantrena
murcchā saṅ-māsikī bhavet
noccāreta mātra spaṣṭam
parikṣid-dhita-kṛn-muniḥ*

If Śukadeva Gosvāmī uttered the name of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, he would at once remember Her pastimes. Due to his *rādhā-prema* he would have become *āviṣṭa-citta*, excited and fixed in remembering Her pastimes and activities in the service of Kṛṣṇa. He would then have become internally fixed on Kṛṣṇa and externally inert for six months. But Parīkṣit Mahārāja had only seven days to live, and Śukadeva wanted him to have the benefit of hearing the entire *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Why would Śukadeva Gosvāmī go into an ecstatic trance at the mere mention of the name of Śrīmatī Rādhikā? In his commentary on his own *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, Sanātana Gosvāmī writes:

“Śrīmatī Rādhikā was the worshipful goddess of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, so whenever he uttered Her name, he would become *āviṣṭa-citta*, internally spiritually excited and externally inert. So in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* he has given the name of Rādhikā and other *gopīs* in a hidden way.” Śukadeva Gosvāmī has therefore not uttered Her name directly, but only indirectly. According to the *rasa-śāstra*, an indirect utterance is better than a direct one.

*vedā brahmātma-viṣayās
tri-kāṇḍa-viṣayā ime
parokṣa-vādā ṛṣayaḥ
parokṣaṁ mama ca priyam*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.21.35)

[Kṛṣṇa said:] The Vedas, divided into three divisions, ultimately reveal the living entity as pure spirit soul. The Vedic seers and *mantras*, however, deal in esoteric terms, and I am also pleased by such confidential descriptions.

So Śukadeva Gosvāmī also uttered the *gopīs*’ names indirectly, as in the word *anayārādhitaḥ* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.30.28)), which indicates that *gopī* by whom Kṛṣṇa was perfectly worshipped, Śrīmatī Rādhikā. A *rasika-bhakta* can understand that it was Śrīmatī Rādhikā who had most perfectly worshipped Kṛṣṇa, whom Kṛṣṇa had taken away from the arena of the *rāsa* dance and whom He had disappeared with in the forest. It was only this *gopī* whose head and feet Kṛṣṇa had decorated in a secluded place. Even upon uttering the word *ārādhitaḥ*, which indicates Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and sounds so much like Her name, Śukadeva Gosvāmī at once started becoming *āviṣṭa-citta*. But after becoming so emotional, he then changed the subject.

Also, in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.4.14), Śukadeva Gosvāmī used the word *rādhasā*, meaning “Kṛṣṇa’s unequalled opulence”, as an indirect reference to Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Sanātana Gosvāmī says that in the five chapters of the Tenth Canto of the *Bhāgavatam*

that describe the *rāsa* dance, in the *Gopī-gīta*, in the *Bhramara-gīta* and in the *Uddhava-sandeha*, Śukadeva Gosvāmī has also carefully used other words to indirectly denote Śrīmatī Rādhikā. He has used the words *kāścid dohaṁ hitvā* in verse 10.29.5, the words *tais taiḥ padaiḥ* in verse 10.30.26, the words *yām gopīm anayat* in verse 10.30.35, the words *sā vadhūr anvatapyata* in verse 10.30.38 and the words *kācit karāmbujaṁ śaurer* in verse 10.32.4. Each of these quotes denotes Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the other *gopīs*. Those who are *rasika-bhaktas*, whose eyes are open, can see the names of the *gopīs* and the name of Śrīmatī Rādhikā everywhere, but those who are blind cannot. Therefore we are especially grateful to Sanātana Gosvāmī, for without his revealing these truths to us, we could never understand.

But why would Śukadeva Gosvāmī really become so emotional at the mere mention of the name of Śrīmatī Rādhikā? In the *Bhāgavatam* it is often stated, “*śrī śuka uvāca*.” *Śrī śukā* means *śrīyā śukā*, or the *śuka*, parrot, of Śrī, Śrīmatī Rādhikā. In his *Śrī Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū*, Kavi Karṇapūra explains that previously Śukadeva was the parrot of Rādhikā, and used to sit on Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s left hand while She would feed him the seeds from a pomegranate fruit. She would pet him affectionately telling him, “*Bolo Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!*” This parrot would then sweetly utter the names of Kṛṣṇa.

Once he flew into Kṛṣṇa’s garden at Nandagrāma where he began singing “Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa” as sweetly as Śrīmatī Rādhikā Herself would, and in the same melodious tone. Hearing this, Kṛṣṇa was very attracted, and noticing this beautiful parrot sitting in the pomegranate tree, He said, “Please speak some more.” Then the parrot began to lament, “Oh, I am very wretched and ungrateful because I was sitting in the hand of Śrīmatī Rādhikā Herself, and She was feeding me pomegranate seeds, milk and rice. She was teaching me how to sing ‘Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa’ very

sweetly, but I flew away and have come here, so I am very unfortunate.” Then Kṛṣṇa took the parrot in His hand and began to stroke it. In the meantime, Lalitā and Viśākhā came and said, “This parrot belongs to our mistress, Śrīmatī Rādhikā. It is so dear to Her that She cannot live without it, so please give it to us, and we will return it to Rādhikā.”

Kṛṣṇa replied, “If it is really Hers, then when you call it, it will come to you. And *sakhīs*, if he is not really Hers, then he will not come to you.”

They tried many times to call the parrot, but it would not come to them. Then they began scolding Kṛṣṇa, saying, “Whatever comes to You never gets returned to its rightful owner!” Next they approached Mother Yaśodā and explained the situation, so Yaśodā came and snatched the parrot away from Kṛṣṇa, saying, “You are always doing nothing but playing with animals and birds! It is time for Your bath. Your father is ready to take his meal, but without You he cannot take it. So come at once!” Then she gave the parrot to Lalitā and Viśākhā and dragged Kṛṣṇa away.

Before Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa returned to Goloka Vṛndāvana, They told the parrot, “You must remain in this world to propagate *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.” The parrot began to weep, but They both told him, “Except for you there is no qualified personality to manifest the *Bhāgavatam*, so you must remain here.” So after the disappearance of Rādhikā and Kṛṣṇa, the parrot began searching for a place where *kṛṣṇa-kathā* was being spoken. Knowing that Śaṅkara was a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa, he flew to Kailāsa Mountain, where he found Śaṅkara reciting that same *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to his wife Pārvatī. So he sat in a tree, and being well camouflaged, his presence was unknown to Śaṅkara.

Because the first three cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are very philosophical, in accordance with the nature of a woman Pārvatī fell asleep as she was hearing it. She wanted to hear only the

romantic pastimes, especially how Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa would meet and walk and laugh together. Now and then the parrot would reply, “Yes, yes,” and Śaṅkara would carry on eagerly reciting, thinking that Pārvatī was listening.

When Śaṅkara completed reciting the Twelfth Canto, Pārvatī at once awakened and said, “But I have not heard what I desired to! Have you already spoken the Tenth Canto? Please recite it to me again.” Then Śaṅkara thought, “Then who has been hearing, and from time to time saying, ‘Yes, yes, it is very nice’ in the same tone as Pārvatī?” He began searching, and then, noticing that there was a very beautiful parrot sitting on the branch of a nearby tree, he thought, “A parrot can imitate anyone’s voice, so perhaps he has been saying it. No unqualified person should hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Because he is a bird, he is unqualified, so he should be immediately killed, otherwise he may misuse what he has heard.” Picking up his trident, Śaṅkara went to kill the parrot, but it flew away and entered the *āśrama* of Vyāsadeva on the bank of the river Ganges at Badarikāśrama. There he saw that Vyāsadeva was reciting the same *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to his wife, who was so wonderstruck upon hearing it that her mouth was hanging open in astonishment. Therefore the parrot flew into her mouth and went inside her. Pursuing that parrot, Śaṅkara arrived there with his trident in his hand and said, “Vyāsadeva, I offer *pranāma* to you. I am following a parrot – have you seen it?”

Laughing, Vyāsadeva replied, “Why are you searching for a parrot?”

“I want to kill it.”

“Why?”

“Because he has heard *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but he is unqualified to have done so.”

“May I ask you what is the result of hearing the *Bhāgavatam*?”

“One becomes immortal.”

“So if he has now become immortal, how will you kill him? You should abandon this idea and return to your *āśrama*.” Realising that the parrot could not be killed, Śaṅkara returned to Kailāsa. After living in his mother’s womb for sixteen years, this parrot appeared in the form of Śukadeva and later spoke the *Bhāgavatam*. So because Śukadeva was previously *śriyā śuka*, the parrot of Śrīmatī Rādhikā Herself, he was so *rasika* that he could not utter the name of Rādhikā without becoming *āviṣṭa-citta*.

Other Purāṇas mention Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī directly, but these Purāṇas are not one hundred per cent free from the tinges of fruitive activity (*karma*) and impersonal knowledge (*jñāna*). *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is beyond the other Purāṇas and unique in its freedom from all expressions other than the glorification of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. No hint of *karma* or *jñāna* taints its pages.

The goal of the *Bhāgavatam*, in essence, even more than glorifying Kṛṣṇa, is to glorify Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. This is so because Rādhikā possesses the most selfless love for Kṛṣṇa, more than the other residents of Vṛndāvana, and even more than the other *gopīs*. This being true, the *Bhāgavatam* thus mentions the glories of Rādhikā in practically every verse. Those who have the eyes to see can perceive Rādhikā’s name everywhere, in every verse. But Śukadeva Gosvāmī has carefully spoken *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* so that these glories are mentioned only indirectly. This is natural, for one keeps those things which are dearest to him hidden, protected from the unqualified who cannot fully appreciate them. As a chaste wife covers her head in public with her *sārī* and uncovers it only in the presence of her husband, so Śukadeva has presented the truth about Śrīmatī Rādhikā in a covered fashion. Only the *rasika-bhaktas*, who possess the proper eligibility, can actually pierce Śukadeva’s covering.

Another analogy can help us to understand this point. The naked body of a woman is not so beautiful, but if she covers her

body with a fine transparent cloth and then water is poured on that cloth, each of her features are revealed. This is how to appreciate the beautiful features of a woman. Similarly, the glories of Śrīmatī Rādhikā are enhanced through the thin covering supplied by the author, the supremely intelligent Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Covering Her supreme position also enhances the ultimate revelation of those glories, as things obtained with hardship are appreciated more than those easily attained. Therefore the attainment of *prema* must necessarily include the overcoming of obstacles.

Like oil hidden within mustard seeds or butter hidden within milk, the glories of Śrīmatī Rādhikā are hidden within *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. But the foolish cannot recognise them. The commentaries of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, however, reveal those glories to us. In verse 10.14.34, Brahmā prayed to become a blade of grass in Vṛndāvana so he could catch the dust from the feet of all the residents of Vraja. Uddhava, on the other hand, also desired to take birth as a blade of grass in Vṛndāvana, but only wished to obtain the dust of the feet of one *gopī*. (The word *caraṇa-reṇu*, meaning “the dust from the feet,” is singular in verse 10.47.61.) He wanted only the dust from the feet of that *gopī* who had gone off alone during the *rāsa* dance. And who was that *gopī*? Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

After leaving the *gopīs* during the *rāsa* dance, Kṛṣṇa was smiling a mild, closed smile. Inside, He felt ashamed that He had caused the *gopīs* some difficulty. Verses 10.32.4, 5, 7 and 8 describe how one *gopī* (Candrāvalī) took Kṛṣṇa’s feet in her lap, another (Śyāmalā) took His hand, another (Śaibyā) took His other hand, yet another (Padmā) mildly chastised Him, another (Lalitā) said with some sarcasm, “Oh, You are a very good friend!” and another (Viśākhā) was crying. Verse 10.32.6 describes a seventh *gopī* who exhibited *māna*, jealous anger, from a distance, expressing through Her glance that She believed Kṛṣṇa was

ungrateful, considering all that the *gopīs* had done for Him. This was Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself having assumed the mood of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and He tells us that the *gopīs* are the best worshippers of Kṛṣṇa. If *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* did not contain the glories of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu would have never touched it. But because Her glories are present within every verse, He embraced the *Bhāgavatam* close to His breast.

Thus *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is certainly the spotless Purāṇa, and because of its level of presentation of *rasa* and *siddhānta*, it is without a doubt the most authorised scripture.

Glossary

A

ācārya – spiritual preceptor; one who teaches by example.

ānanda – spiritual bliss, ecstasy, joy or happiness.

anarthas – unwanted desires in the heart, which impede one's advancement in devotional life.

aparādha – an offence committed against the holy name, the Vaiṣṇavas, the spiritual master, the scriptures, holy places or the deity.

āptakāma – one whose every desire is fulfilled.

ārati – the ceremony of offering a deity articles of worship, such as incense, lamp, flowers and fan, accompanied by bell-ringing and chanting.

arcana – deity worship; one of the nine primary processes of devotional service.

āśrama – the residence of someone practising spiritual life.

ātmārāma – one who is self-satisfied.

B

Bhagavān – the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

bhajana – spiritual practices, especially hearing, chanting and meditating upon the holy names, form, qualities and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

bhakti – the word *bhakti* comes from the root *bhaj*, which means to serve. Therefore the primary meaning of the word *bhakti* is to render service. The performance of activities meant exclusively

for the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which are done in a favourable spirit saturated with love, which are devoid of all other desires and which are not covered by the pursuits of fruitive activity (*karma*) or the cultivation of knowledge aimed at merging one's existence into that of the Lord (*jñāna*), is called *bhakti*.

bhāva – (1) spiritual emotions, love or sentiments; (2) the initial stage of perfection in devotion (*bhāva-bhakti*).

Brahman – the impersonal, all-pervading feature of the Lord, which is devoid of attributes and qualities.

brahmacārī – a member of the first *āśrama* (stage of life) in the *varṇāśrama* system; a celibate, unmarried student.

brahma-jñāna – knowledge that the living entity is spiritual by nature.

brāhmaṇa – the intellectual class amongst the four castes within the Vedic social system.

brahmāṇḍa – an egg-shaped material universe.

D

darśana – seeing, meeting, visiting with, beholding.

dāsyā – one of the five primary relationships with the Lord that is established in the heart when one is in the stage of *bhāva* or *prema*; love for or attraction to the Lord that is expressed in the mood of a servant.

dharma – religion in general; the socio-religious duties prescribed in the scriptures for different classes of persons in the *varṇāśrama* system.

dhotī – a piece of cloth worn round the lower body, one end of which passes between the legs and is tucked in behind.

G

gāyatrī – secret *mantras* given to a disciple by the spiritual master at the time of second initiation.

gopas – the cowherd boys who serve Kṛṣṇa in the mood of intimate friends. This may also refer to the elderly *gopas* who serve Kṛṣṇa in the mood of parental affection.

gopīs – the young cowherd maidens of Vraja, headed by Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the mood of amorous love. This may also refer to the elderly *gopīs*, headed by Mother Yaśodā, who serve Kṛṣṇa in the mood of parental affection.

H

hari-kathā – narrations of the Lord's pastimes and personal nature.

harināma – the holy name of the Lord, especially referring to the *mahā-mantra*.

J

japa – very soft utterance or whispering of the holy names of the Lord to oneself; usually refers to the practice of chanting *harināma* on *tulasī* beads.

jīva – the eternal individual living entity, who in the conditioned state of material existence assumes a material body in any of the innumerable species of life.

jñānī – one who pursues the path of *jñāna*, knowledge directed towards impersonal liberation.

K

Kali-yuga – the present age of quarrel and hypocrisy, which began five thousand years ago.

karatālas – small brass hand cymbals used in devotional music.

kaupīnas – the loincloth of an ascetic.

kevrā – a scent made from the fragrant flower of the screwpine.

kīśorī – an adolescent girl.

kuñja – a grove or bower; a natural shady retreat, the sides and roof of which are formed mainly by trees and climbing plants.

kuṅkuma – a powder used by women for personal decoration.

L

lākha – one hundred thousand.

M

madhyama-adhikāra – the intermediate stage of devotional development.

mahābhāva – the highest stage of divine love.

mahārathī – a powerful warrior who can single-handedly fight against ten thousand others.

mahātmā – a great spiritual personality.

mantra – a spiritual sound vibration that delivers the mind from its material conditioning and illusion when repeated over and over; a Vedic hymn, prayer or chant.

māyā – the Lord’s illusory potency, which influences the living entities to accept the false egoism of being independent enjoyers of this material world.

N

nāma-saṅkīrtana – congregational chanting of the holy names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

namaskāra – a respectful salutation.

P

praṇāma – an obeisance.

paramahansa – a topmost, God-realised, “swan-like” devotee of the Supreme Lord.

prasāda – literally meaning mercy, especially refers to the remnants of food offered to the deity.

prema – divine love.

pūjā – offering of worship.

pujārī – a priest who formally offers *pūjā*, worship, to the deity form of the Lord.

Puruṣottama – a name for the Supreme Lord that literally means “the supreme male personality”.

R

rāgānuga-bhakti – an elevated stage of devotion that is motivated by spontaneous attraction or love.

rasa – the spiritual transformation of the heart that takes place when the perfected state of love for Kṛṣṇa, known as *rati*, is converted into “liquid” emotions by combination with various types of transcendental ecstasy.

rāsa-līlā – Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s dance with the *vraja-gopīs*, which is a pure exchange of spiritual love between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, His most confidential servitors.

rasika – one who relishes the mellows of devotion (*rasa*) within his heart.

roṭī – Indian-style unleavened bread that is oven-baked.

rudrākṣa – literally meaning “the eyes of Śiva”, these are berries that are strung together and used as chanting beads by followers of Śiva.

S

sabji – cooked vegetables.

sādhaka – one who follows a spiritual discipline with the objective of achieving pure devotion for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

sādhana – the stage of devotional life in which a spiritual discipline is performed for the purpose of bringing about the manifestation of ecstatic, pure love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*bhāva*).

sādhū – a saintly person.

sādhya – the goal of one’s spiritual practice.

śahanāī – a piped instrument known best for being played at Indian weddings.

sakhā – a male friend, companion or attendant.

sakhī – a female friend, companion or attendant.

sakhya – one of the five primary relationships with Kṛṣṇa that is established in the heart when one is in the stage of *bhāva* or *prema*; love or attachment for the Lord that is expressed in the mood of a friend.

śālagrāma-śilā – self-manifesting deities of Nārāyaṇa in the form of small, round black stones that are found in the Gandakī River in the Himalayas.

sannyāsī – one in the renounced order of life.

śānta – the mood of neutrality, one of the five primary relationships with the Lord that is established in the heart when one is in the stage of *bhāva* or *prema*.

siddhānta – philosophical doctrine or precept; demonstrated conclusion; established end; admitted truth.

śimhāsana – a throne, usually situated on an altar.

sītāra – an Indian musical instrument of three to seven strings, with a resonator.

svarūpa – the eternal constitutional nature and identity of the self, which is realised in the stage of ecstatic love (*bhāva*).

T

tilaka – clay markings worn on the forehead and other parts of the body by Vaiṣṇavas, signifying their devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu, and consecrating the body as the Lord’s temple.

tulasī – a sacred plant whose leaves and blossoms are used by Vaiṣṇavas in the worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; the wood is also used for chanting beads and neck beads.

V

vaidhī-bhakti – devotion that is prompted by the rules and regulations of the scriptures.

vaijayantī – a garland made of five varieties of flower and which reaches the knees.

varṇāśrama – the Vedic social system, which organises society into four occupational divisions (*varṇas*) and four stages of life (*āśramas*).

vātsalya – one of the five primary relationships with Kṛṣṇa that is established in the heart when one is in the stage of *bhāva* or *prema*; love or attachment for the Lord expressed in the mood of a parent.

vīṇā – a large Indian instrument of the type of the lute.

Vraja – Śrī Vṛndāvana, the eighty-four square mile area in the district of Mathurā wherein Kṛṣṇa enacted His pastimes.

Y

yoga – (1) union, meeting, connection, combination; (2) a spiritual discipline aiming at establishing one's connection with the Supreme. There are many different branches of *yoga* such as *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga*. Unless specified as such the word *yoga* usually refers to the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* system of Patañjali.

Yogamāyā – the Lord's internal potency, which enhances the sweetness and beauty of His pastimes.

yogī – one who practises the *yoga* system with the goal of realisation of the Supersoul or of merging into the Lord's personal body.

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