



REFLECTIONS

ON SACRED TEACHINGS

VOLUME ONE: SRI SIKSASTAKA

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B.T. SWAMI

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Volume One: Sri Siksastaka

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First printing 2002

Interior design by Subala dasa / Ecstatic Creations

Cover design by Brahma Muhurta dasa and Subala dasa

Photo by Nanda-nandana devi dasi

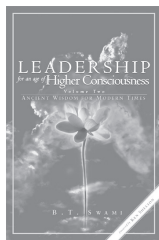
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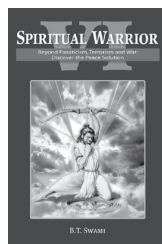
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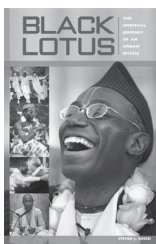
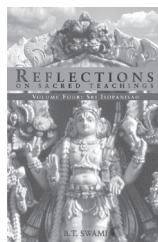


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REFLECTIONS

ON SACRED TEACHINGS

Volume One: Sri Siksastaka

Dedication

“I want to dedicate this book to all of my GBC associates, who work so tirelessly in serving Srila Prabhupada’s mission. May Lord Caitanya extend His blessings upon all of you, as we all work together in trying to spread the Holy Name to every town and every village.”

Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank Lila-Katha dasi for the main editing of the book. I want to especially thank Sarvabhavana dasa for his translations, which I heavily relied upon, and Jambavan dasa and Jayadeva dasa for proofreading the Sanskrit verses. I would also like to thank Mangala-arotika dasi, Jagannatha Pandit dasa, Bhaja Govinda dasi, Sri Isopanisd dasi, Daksina dasi, Sivaratri dasi, Badra dasi, Samvit dasi, Sthayi Bhava dasi and Jisnu dasa for transcribing the many audio tapes; and Jambavati dasi, Aja dasa, Kripa dasi and Subala dasa for layout, final editing and all the things necessary for bringing this book to press. I would like to express my greatest appreciation for my disciples in the United Kingdom for being so gracious as to finance this publication. May Lord Caitanya, who is most magnanimous, bestow His benedictions on all of you.

For those interested in further study of the *Sri Siksastaka* prayers, I encourage you to read *Sri Siksastaka: Eight Beautiful Instructions*, which includes translations by Sri Sarvabhavana Dasa of the original *Siksastaka* prayers and commentaries by Sri Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami (Harmonist Publications Hare Krishna Printers, Bombay, India, 1991)

Foreword

The *Siksastaka*, as explained in this book, are a rare and confidential series of eight brief prayers—though they are short, these verses are able to change your life, taking you from the most fundamental level of spiritual realization to the most exalted. I am deeply enlivened that His Holiness Bhakti-Tirtha Swami, a dear friend and superlative *Vaisnava*, has chosen to comment on these most important of theistic texts. He is eminently qualified to do so—years of practice and a heart filled with devotion have given him invaluable insights. But, more, he has a spirit that acts as a key, a key that he often uses to unlock the mysteries of Caitanya *Vaisnavism*, the esoteric essence of all religious truth. As the Swami says in this book, he has delved into these prayers “as a service to the *Vaisnava* community.”

“These prayers,” he continues, “contain volumes of mysteries, secrets and knowledge. Just as the chanting of the holy name contains all knowledge, the spiritual world, and *rasa-tattva* (the truth of spiritual relationship), these eight prayers contain everything.”

It is an interesting manifestation of serendipity that I am called upon to write this foreword at this time: *Back to Godhead*, the magazine of the Hare Krsna movement, recently decided to print my five-part lecture series on these very same *Siksastaka* Prayers (beginning with the March/April 2002 issue).

But this, you see, is Bhakti-Tirtha Swami! He is clearly a mystic, and such fortuitous occurrences are not uncommon in his presence. This is why it is so special that we receive a commentary on these most special prayers from him: he is a most special person.

He lives these prayers in his day-to-day life. Just as Sri Caitanya, the author of the *Siksastaka* Prayers, entered into their mood so He could express them with clarity and vision, so, too, does Bhakti-Tirtha Swami accentuate the need to enter into these prayers on a personal level: "In the mood of a *bhakta* or devotee," he says, "Lord Caitanya taught how to fully surrender and how to acquire Bhagavan through the process of *bhakti*, or pure devotion. He showed that *bhakti* develops from *bhakti* and cannot be controlled or regulated by anything other than *bhakti*. This devotional service far surpasses processes such as *jnana* or empiric philosophy, *tapasya* or austerity, and *yajna* or sacrifice." Bhakti-Tirtha Swami thus establishes the need to walk in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya, and, like the Lord, he describes *bhakti* as the highest path.

"This *Siksastaka* states the conclusion of Krsna consciousness," Bhakti-Tirtha Swami tells us, "and offers the culmination of all the Vedas; therefore, it is the necklace that all *Vaisnavas* should wear. A necklace worn around the neck practically touches the heart. These verses are essential for us and should be kept close to our hearts. They should not be viewed as optional or as an extracurricular aspect of our spiritual life."

Though the *Siksastaka* Prayers represent the spiritual sciences at their most complex, Bhakti-Tirtha Swami explains them in an almost simple way, in a way that allows the reader to enter in. In other words, he makes it accessible: "Each *sloka* (verse) distinctly progresses from the most basic levels of consciousness to the ultimate expressions of love of Godhead. The first *sloka* emphasizes the process of congregational chanting. Number two discusses our ineptitude to take up chanting the holy name. Three provides a specific procedure for chanting the *mahamantra*. The fourth *sloka* focuses on the elimination of all unfavorable desires. The fifth deals with knowledge of the *jivas'* original spiritual identity, *svarupajnana*. Number six describes how the living entity will experience good fortune by coming closer to the Lord. The seventh verse shows the mood of separation experienced by those who have come to this topmost platform. This is *vipralambha*, the mood of separation. The eighth discusses the process of obtaining the highest perfection or ultimate goal called *prayojana*. From these eight *slokas* alone, we can already see the entire *Nectar of Devotion*."

And this, of course, has always been the Swami's forte: He explains eternal truths in a way that enables a contemporary audience to appreciate them. He opens up the doors to the treasure house of Vedic wisdom, and, somehow, without diluting it, he gets us to walk in, to take off our coats and shoes, and to feel at home. Before long, we are immersed in Vedic knowledge, in a comfortable and down home kind of

way. Soon after, we are ready to partake of a friendly dinner in the company of *Vaisnavas*, and that dinner is comprised of the most succulent fare: *bhakti*. This book is a prime example of this phenomenon, and so, without any further distraction, I ask the Swami's readers to enthusiastically dine on his most nectarian words.

—Satyaraja Dasa (Steven J. Rosen),
Author, *Gita on the Green: The Mystical
Tradition Behind Bagger Vance*
Senior editor, *The Journal of Vaishnava
Studies*

Author's Preface

The spiritual journey is simultaneously very simple and complex. It is frightening and dangerous but at the same time extremely exciting and adventurous. We may often feel that we are traveling alone, but in fact the opposite is true. Krsna is with us at every moment as Paramatma, situated in each person's heart. He also descends in His most personal and magnanimous form as Lord Caitanya, where He experiences the *bhava* of His eternal consort and *hladini-sakti* potency, Srimati Radharani. In this manifestation of Lord Caitanya, He presents Himself as a devotee for our benefit. It is not only Krsna that comes in so many *lilas* for the benefit of His devotees and to annihilate and expose the miscreants; many of His eternal associates frequent the material world to assist the Lord with His awesome missions. Our great *acaryas* are such associates. I have relied on the commentaries of two of our *acaryas*, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura for inspiration for my reflections on the *Siksastaka* prayers.

For self-purification and as a service to the *Vaisnava* community, I have chosen to offer a brief commentary on the eight *Siksastaka* prayers by Lord Caitanya. These prayers are extremely important in the life of the *Vaisnava*, and their mysteries continue to unfold as devotees reflect on them more and more. I originally presented the material in this book as a course for devotees at the Gita Nagari farm

community in rural Pennsylvania during a *Vaisnava* Institute gathering. I hope this small offering will help and encourage the readers to make a more in-depth study of these great works for themselves.

The *Siksastaka* prayers are brief, but present eternal profound truths. They present information on states of consciousness from *sambandha* through *prayojana*, and discuss obstacles to be avoided as well as achievements to be attained.

By the mercy of Srila Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya, even a lowly fool like myself can read such an extraordinary text and have the audacity to share a few ideas with others. I hope that you as readers will benefit from reflecting on these great verses as much or more than I have myself.

Introduction

This *Siksastaka* contains two very common words, *siksa* and *astaka*. *Siksa* is instruction or instructor and *astaka* is eight. Therefore, *Siksastaka* means the eight instructions. Out of His causeless mercy, Krsna appeared as the sum total of all knowledge known by the Vedas and gave this knowledge in an intimate and personal way. He arranged to have many agents come before Him, with Him, and after Him such as Srila Prabhupada and the six *gosvamis* who wrote volumes of literature. Lord Caitanya did not write even one book or pamphlet, but left us only these eight prayers. Srila Prabhupada discusses this interesting fact in his different books and lectures:

“Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu instructed His disciples to write books on the science of Krsna, a task which those who follow Him have continued to carry out down to the present day. The elaborations and expositions on the philosophy taught by Lord Caitanya are in fact most voluminous, exacting and consistent due to the system of disciplic succession. Although Lord Caitanya was widely renowned as a scholar in His youth, He left only eight verses, called Siksastaka. These eight

verses clearly reveal His mission and precepts."

The Teachings of Lord Caitanya, xxiii

These prayers contain volumes of mysteries, secrets and knowledge. Just as the chanting of the holy name contains all knowledge, the spiritual world, and *rasa-tattva*, these eight prayers contain everything. We have accepted Kṛṣṇa consciousness because we want to surrender and give up all *anarthas* or unnecessary impediments. We want to be natural and allow ourselves to understand our original *svarupa* or our eternal identities. We have accepted the understanding that something exists far beyond what we have experienced consciously in this lifetime and in other lifetimes. We do not want to just enjoy the *sakti*, or the energy of the Lord; rather, we want to associate with the *saktiman*, or the energetic. Due to our distance from such association in these material worlds, in *martyaloka*, the Lord even comes Himself at different times to demonstrate the exact process to follow.

The Mission of Lord Caitanya

In order to properly appreciate Lord Caitanya's message, we must first examine the unique position and mission of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself. If a special person with an important position brings a message, we can understand that the message must also be of great importance. In this case, the greatest person, the Supreme Person-

ality of Godhead, has come in a unique way with a message. Krsna gives these *Siksastaka* prayers to us in His most magnanimous form as Lord Caitanya. *namo maha-vadanyaya krsna-prema-pradaya te krsnaya krsna-caitanya-namne gaura-tvise namah*. Lord Caitanya is non-different from Krsna and is actually Krsna in a special manifestation. The *hladini-sakti* facilitates Radharani and Krsna, who are actually only one but have manifested as two for engaging in divine loving exchanges. They come together in this material world as Lord Caitanya to help us appreciate the intensity of devotion and love accessible for all living entities. By reflecting on Lord Caitanya's extraordinary position, we can better appreciate the exaltedness and profundity of His gift to this world.

Among Krsna's different plenary expansions, *avatars*, and incarnations, Lord Caitanya is particularly special. He inaugurated the idea of profusely and indiscriminately distributing knowledge to all persons, worthy or unworthy. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu came as a devotee, showing us how to become devotees ourselves. He is the teacher and knows the message, but He acted as a student in order to clearly present the process in a basic manner. As the supreme teacher, He established the *yajna* or sacrifice for this age, the chanting of the Hare Krsna *maha-mantra*. Although previous *Vaisnavas* had established this *maha-mantra* before Lord Caitanya's appearance, He specifically reintroduced the chanting as the *yuga-dharma* for this age

of *Kali*. He delivered the most esoteric knowledge in the simplest form to the people in this age of *Kali* so that both the educated and uneducated could understand. Lord Caitanya made Himself available by bringing the highest knowledge down to anyone capable of taking advantage of the message. Although this special dispensation of the highest knowledge is very hard to acquire, Kṛṣṇa makes it available in order to give everyone a chance. Throughout His mission, Lord Caitanya preached in many different places, inviting in all types of people from other paths, even *mlecchas* and *mayavadis*. Lord Caitanya's design and order is to spread the message in every town and village: *prthivite acheyata nagaradi grama sarvatra pracara haibe mora nama*. He did not want to limit the message to only a small percentage of the world or to only a certain class of people. He wanted it distributed indiscriminately.

In the mood of a *bhakta* or devotee, Lord Caitanya taught how to fully surrender and how to acquire Bhagavan through the process of *bhakti*, or pure devotion. He showed that *bhakti* develops from *bhakti* and cannot be controlled or regulated by anything other than *bhakti*. This devotional service far surpasses processes such as *jñāna* or empiric philosophy, *tapasya* or austerity, and *yajna* or sacrifice.

Lord Caitanya's appearance fulfilled His desire to receive His own dynamic love and association and to experience the mood of Radharani. He revealed

the great love inherent in Srimati Radharani and the devotees, and He brought genuine dynamic love into this world. Caitanya Mahaprabhu exhibited the symptoms of *mahabhava* and *prema* and performed as the supreme Dancer in His eternal party. Although we can never fully count Lord Caitanya's qualities, this brief description of His exalted activities and nature can help us to better appreciate the significance of His appearance.

Our Place in History

The value of our own involvement in this Hare Krsna movement should be clear in our consciousness after hearing these extraordinary descriptions. We must recognize that Lord Caitanya is a special expression of Krsna. We should remember our position as the branches of Mahaprabhu's tree. In one sense, all of our projects, temples and activities around the world are now a part of spiritual history. A time will come when people will read about the history of the *Vaisnavas* on this planet and reflect on the various events and achievements that have taken place in the ISKCON movement under the banner of Lord Caitanya. Considering that He has recently left, we can reflect on the significance of our presence on this planet at this particular time. As we deeply access all the amazing literatures, stories and understandings available, we can begin to realize the powerful treasure contained within these eight verses. We should recognize this valuable key that can open sacred doors to the spiritual world. As

we recite these *slokas* daily, we should constantly endeavor to enter more deeply into their meaning and mystery. This *Siksastaka* states the conclusion of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and offers the culmination of all the Vedas; therefore, it is the necklace that all *Vaiṣṇavas* should wear. A necklace worn around the neck practically touches the heart. These verses are essential for us and should be kept close to our hearts. They should not be viewed as optional or as an extracurricular aspect of our spiritual life.

Levels of Relationship

The first five prayers of the *Sri Siksastaka* deal mostly with *sambandha-jnana*, whereas six to eight describe *prayojana*. *Abhidheya* runs through each prayer. Although number six introduces aspects of *bhava*, it sometimes falls into the same category as seven and eight which give aspects of *prema*. *Sambandha-jnana* is the position of establishing our relationship with the Lord. *Abhidheya* refers to the activities in this relationship and *prayojana* means the goal itself or love of God. All of our books and rituals touch on some of these aspects. Many scriptures try to help us accept the existence of a God and teach basic ethics and morality, but certain rare scriptures, such as these, give deeper knowledge in relation to the activities of the spiritual world after we return to Kṛṣṇa. This is transcendental culture. Religion does not give this aspect of the spiritual world; rather, it describes heaven and paradise as the ultimate end. Actually, that is just the beginning of real

life, which terminates in the spiritual world in direct association of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Once we are back in the association of the Lord, we will not just sit around; rather, there will be so many variegated spiritual activities. Then the real activity will begin. Our theology asks these questions: What do you do with God? What is the nature of the soul? What happens to the soul? We should find out the nature of the activities in the spiritual world because maybe we will not want to return. In the material world, even rich people suffer from boredom when they do not have any activities or engagements. They may live in wonderful environments or even in beautiful palaces with servants; however, without some type of activities, they will simply become bored and miserable. Life will become meaningless. Could this be the nature of the spiritual kingdom? Will we merely return to eternally do nothing? This would be like hell rather than a type of spiritual boon.

Each *sloka* distinctly progresses from the most basic levels of consciousness to the ultimate expressions of love of Godhead. The first *sloka* emphasizes the process of congregational chanting. Number two discusses our ineptitude to take up chanting the holy name. Three provides a specific procedure for chanting the *maha-mantra*. The fourth *sloka* focuses on the elimination of all unfavorable desires. The fifth deals with knowledge of the *jivas'* original spiritual identity, *svarupa-jnana*. Number six describes how the living entity will experience good fortune by coming closer to the Lord. The

seventh verse shows the mood of separation experienced by those who have come to this topmost platform. This is *vipralambha*, the mood of separation. The eighth discusses the process of obtaining the highest perfection or ultimate goal called *prayojana*. From these eight *slokas* alone, we can already see the entire *Nectar of Devotion*.

Chanting the Holy Names

This first *sloka* speaks of *nama-tattva*, which emphasizes the process of chanting the holy names of the Lord. There are two types of chanting, silent chanting or *japa*, and congregational chanting or *nama-sankirtana*. Many pictures of Lord Caitanya and the *panca-tattva* show Them dancing and chanting in villages with drums and *karatalas*. The Lord's hands are raised as He sings and dances. It is significant that this first offering emphasizes the importance of congregational chanting. Even in common literature, readers and authors both know the importance of a strong introduction in order to catch public attention, and a strong finish to leave the reader with a powerful impression. In this case, Caitanya Mahaprabhu introduces *harinama-sankirtana* as number one. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* similarly concludes with the glories of congregational chanting. As the intense discussion between Sukadeva Goswami and Maharaja Pariksit concludes, the final verse encourages everyone to participate in this process of *nama-sankirtana*. This conclusion to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is amazing. Through this

analysis of the holy name, we can also appreciate that our spoken words or vibrations carry direct connotations to the topics of our words. Therefore, we associate with the objects of our speech through our sound vibrations. Considering these points, the transcendental sound vibration carries us that much closer into the association of the Lord. We are prisoners, incarcerated by the *maha-tattva* in these material forms. The sound vibration of the holy name literally penetrates many of the chains that have us shackled. Therefore, as the Lord's first topic in the *Siksastaka* prayers and last message in the *Bhagavatam*, we can appreciate the importance of *nama-sankirtana*. Unfortunately, it is extremely unusual to see this chanting in the prison of the material world.

Whether we chant the names of God through *bhajana*, *japa* or *sankirtana*, we can appreciate the importance of this practice. Even a sociological examination of cultures, especially ancient cultures, will reveal a dance for every major event. Most cultural groups have a dance for childbirth, for weddings and even for funerals. Singing and dancing have a spiritual origin, but in the material environment these activities tend to revolve around the senses. Spiritual dances and spiritual songs are intended for the congregational glorification of God as an offering. We are literally practicing now for our return to the Kingdom of God. We may act without much realization, but if we act with some humility, gradually the devotional creeper will grow.

Krsna controls everything, maintains everything, and ultimately destroys everything. However, in His most intimate form, He comes with His arms raised, singing and dancing as His own devotee to distribute the holy name in every town and village.

Many of us can remember the first time we saw devotees chanting and dancing in the streets; an unusual sight for us. Watching the devotees marching through downtown or along some chaotic street is extraordinary. The devotees do not belong to the material world. This transcendental activity has little to do with the material patterns of society. Even our own experiences on *harinama* confirm this fact. If we are absorbed on the mental platform or in these material patterns, street chanting will be extremely hellish. We will simply think about our public image, or even feel anxious at the thought of seeing an old acquaintance. All kinds of thoughts can absorb the mind. *Sankirtana* almost forces us to become transcendental, recognizing that the devotees are simply not part of the material scheme. Srila Prabhupada brought this Krsna consciousness movement to the West through the potent process of *sankirtana*. When he arrived in this wretched place, the Western world, he very nobly but humbly sat down and simply chanted Hare Krsna. Through the power of his chanting, people gathered and some accepted. The holy name affected the hearts of so many individuals. In the early days of this movement, temples started in this way with only a few devotees and little facility. They would simply go into the streets with

the few available books at that time and chant the holy name. We can understand that this chanting is the *yajna* for this age of *Kali*. We no longer have to perform *yajnas* for years and years as in previous ages; we simply have to follow this joyful process of *harinama-sankirtana*.

Devotional Processes for Each Age

Nevertheless, a specific *yuga-dharma* is prescribed for each age according to the nature of the people. In *Satya-yuga*, meditation was the *dharma* or the primary way for people to gain realization and purity in order to transcend the body and return to the spiritual world. Since *Satya-yuga* was not very sinful or difficult, meditation was the appropriate religious principle of the age. Without the excessive contamination of sin, people could easily absorb their minds in deep levels of realization and enter into deep states of consciousness or trance to the point of even having contact with the Supersoul. Then they could receive direction and guidance to gain freedom from the material world. In *Treta-yuga*, the degradation intensified due to more general patterns of sin that indicated the need for another type of *yuga-dharma*. Of course, the holy name is always present throughout each age but not with the same emphasis as in *Kali-yuga*. There is never a time when the holy name is not important, but due to the constitution of the people and the nature of the environment, other *yuga-dharmas* were prescribed. Therefore, *yajnas* or

sacrifices were emphasized in *Treta-yuga* which required a serious endeavor. During these rituals, the *mantras* must be chanted perfectly in order to receive the results. If the *brahmanas* or priests made one mistake, they would bring inauspiciousness to themselves and to others. Srila Prabhupada gave only the basic instructions to the *brahmanas* in ISKCON. If we performed all the rituals required of a *brahmana*, we would spend all day just preparing to bathe, eat or even chant *gayatri*. Prabhupada gave us just the essence, since all these rituals would overwhelm us. However, in *Treta-yuga*, the rituals were performed in exact ways because of the nature of the environment. Since the residents had the ability to execute the rituals, they were expected to perform them. Furthermore, the people in *Satya-yuga* lived for 100,000 years, in *Treta-yuga* 10,000 years and in *Dvapara-yuga* 1,000 years.

In *Dvapara-yuga*, the process or *dharma* was Deity worship. Temple worship entails many details, which can even now overwhelm a new *pujari*. Large temples may have very high standards and even require specific cloth to dress the Lord, special flutes according to the mood, or special types of turbans and crowns. When we serve the Deities, we can either make offenses or perform the service nicely. Deity service is usually elaborate and is the way to fully capture the mind in order to reinstate the living entity. However, someone may worship the Deities for eight or ten years but then one day become completely captured by *maya*. The potency

of our temple worship depends on the level of our consciousness while executing the service. The mind fights against accepting.

Krsna makes Himself available in the *arca-vigraha* to help us become free of all this impersonalism and voidism. Nevertheless, someone might touch or dress the Lord and even pray to Him directly, but Krsna may hide from them because in *Kali-yuga*, these activities alone are not sufficient—our minds are captured by the dust of false ego and lust. Therefore, in this age of *Kali* we have the chanting of the holy names of the Lord, but all the other aspects are still present such as reflections or meditations, the performance of *yajnas* and temple worship. We even have the nine-fold process of devotional service. Prahlada Maharaja explains in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 7.5.23:

*sravanam kirtanam visnoh
smaranam pada-sevanam
arcanam vandanam dasyam
sakhyam atma-nivedanam*

*“Hearing and chanting about the
transcendental holy name, form,
qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes
of Lord Visnu, remembering them,
serving the lotus feet of the Lord,
offering the Lord respectful worship
with sixteen types of paraphernalia,
offering prayers to the Lord, becoming*

His servant, considering the Lord one's best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him (in other words, serving Him with the body, mind and words) these nine processes are accepted as pure devotional service."

However, since we do not perform any of these services very well, we should engage in them all and pray for mercy and grace. Lord Caitanya comes Himself and makes one last arrangement before Kalki appears. At that point, the only way to help the people will be to force them out of their bodies because their senses, minds, intelligence and bodies will have no desire to surrender to Krsna. The bodies are actually different in each age as well. The bodies in *Satya-yuga* have a huge size, long life, tremendous intelligence and strength, but as time passes the bodies decrease in size while the false ego increases. Nothing else increases in *Kali-yuga* except the false ego. People become less inclined toward spiritual association and spirituality, the intelligence and senses become duller, and the body size decreases. The entities in *Satya-yuga* would appear as giants to us. Despite all these reductions, the false ego continues to think, "I am most wonderful." The less people have, the more the false ego tricks them into thinking that they are very special. For example, someone who is crazy may walk through the streets, disturbed and homeless, but view everyone else as crazy. The homeless person may see the garbage

cans as treasures and see the pedestrians who ignore these treasures as crazy. *Kali-yuga* will eventually become so pervasive that practically everyone will become crazy. After awhile, the only hope for the people will be to remove them from their bodies since communication will no longer help. Lord Caitanya comes with the greatest mercy and then Kalki brings mercy in another form by taking the people out of their bodies in order to give them some elevation. We are currently in the stage where we have the holy names and the *Siksastaka* prayers that the Lord has broken down from the Vedas. He already arranged to give us the *Mahabharata* and its essence, the *Bhagavad-gita*. He even broke the knowledge down in the *Bhagavata Purana*, which is the essence and ripened fruit of all the Puranas. Although the Lord has made so many arrangements, most people cannot catch up with the process. Therefore, He breaks it down even further into these eight prayers and gives them Himself so that we can dive into them.

These holy names can literally protect us against much of the voidism, impersonalism and sinfulness bombarding our minds in this age of *Kali*. Sometimes we may have to regroup by allowing ourselves to engage more in the congregational sharing of the names of God. For most of us, this chanting may become a bit taxing when we are in *maya* because it can cause us to feel foolish. We can monitor our consciousness in this way because the more we feel foolish, the more we must be identifying with the

material energy. If we feel foolish while chanting Krsna's name in public and feel conscious of the unlimited eyes scrutinizing our activities, we can understand the extent of our identification with the material energy.

My Story

Recently the devotees discussed the different ways they joined the movement, and this led me to reflect on my own experience. I joined this movement in an unusual way. I first saw the devotees in Boston on Harvard Square. It was extremely cold, almost ten below zero, and these Hare Krsnas were bundled up on the street corner chanting. There were seven or eight devotees including Satsvarupa Maharaja and some older devotees from the Boston temple. At this time, in 1970 or 1971, I had been attending Princeton and was on my way to a game at Harvard. After returning several hours later, I noticed the devotees still chanting on the same street corner and thought that these people were either extremely crazy or had something incredibly deep. We could barely tolerate the outside temperature for five or ten minutes before running into a building or car for some heat. Despite the cold, they just kept chanting, dancing and even jumping. Just from their appearance, I could observe something very unusual and special.

I had been visiting different *yogis* and spiritualists, taking initiation from this *guru* and that *guru*. Anytime I heard of some *guru* or spiritualist, I would

go to learn and take initiation. One teacher who instructed me for four or five years in the late 60's taught me a variety of disciplines such as *raja-yoga*, *hatha-yoga*, *astanga-yoga* and other mystical practices. Nevertheless, he always told me that he was not my teacher or *guru*. I next met another teacher, Sri Chinmoy, joined his group, and took initiation in New York. After returning to my previous teacher, I told him, "Now I have met my *guru* and taken initiation." He laughed, saying, "This teacher only has a little impersonal realization at best and it is not what you think." I replied, "But he is advertised as the *jagat-guru*, the spiritual master of the universe." He laughed and said, "The position of this particular personality is not something very serious." Remarkably, he always mentioned Prabhupada's name but I simply thought that Prabhupada was an uncle or some friend. Prabhupada's name would always come up as a reference when he explained different points. When I returned from Sri Chinmoy, I had been excited at the prospect of finding my *guru* but extremely disappointed to hear that he also was not my teacher. One day he asked me, "Do you really want to know who the *jagat-guru* is?" and I replied, "Yes, yes, yes, I really want to know." Then he repeated more emphatically, "Do you really want to know?" Again I answered, "Yes." Actually, he was cautioning me, realizing that my life would have to change after hearing this truth. He asked one last time, "Do you REALLY want to know?" I said, "YES." He finally answered, "The spiritual master of the

Hare Krsna movement." "WHAT?" I asked, "Those people who wear bed sheets and jump up and down in the streets with war paint on their faces?" I immediately remembered the first time that I saw them on *harinama*. I questioned him, "You mean that they have deep philosophy and a special spiritual mentor?" He said, "Yes." He explained Srila Prabhupada's position as the *jagat-guru* and the spiritual master of spiritual masters. My teacher then began to explain, "When Prabhupada came to the West, many other spiritual leaders who knew something of his level of excellence and position in the world should have assisted him in his mission. I have always told you that I am not your *guru* because I am not. These teachings never deeply excited you because you are supposed to be involved in *bhakti*. Nevertheless, these things will help you in the future with the work you will have to do."

This completely astounded me because I always looked for truth, and now this particular spiritual authority informed me of a higher truth available in the Krsna consciousness movement. I tend to be extreme in whatever I do and try to do it intensely. This new dilemma required deep reflection. From my observation of the Hare Krsna devotees, I could understand that their practice was not some extra-curricular, yogic experience. This required a commitment beyond weekly meetings and a few *asanas*. Following these Hare Krsnas would mean a total shift in my lifestyle and mindset. I searched for ways to avoid dealing with the situation, unable to believe

that such high knowledge could be found among these strange people in the streets. After attending Princeton and preparing for a career in the United Nations, I could hardly accept that higher knowledge meant wearing a bed sheet, painting your face and jumping in the streets for the rest of your life.

This situation forced me to reflect on the value of my teacher. I knew this person for four or five years and he never lied to me. As a very powerful *yogi*, he had many faculties such as the ability to read minds and see into the future. I began reflecting on his previous instructions which all proved to be correct. I could not just reject this instruction, especially since he did not try to claim me and had helped me previously in many ways. I then decided to go and study the Krsna people just to prove that they did not have any higher truth. This was the only way that I felt capable of dealing with the situation at that time. I began visiting the New York temple simply to find fault in order to comfortably close that chapter of my life. In this way, I could somehow find a means to later reject that teacher and continue with my extracurricular yogic practices elsewhere. During my visits at the temple, I began to learn and understand more about *harinama* and Krsna consciousness but asked numerous questions after the classes, still trying to find fault. I also bought and read many books simply to find fault. From the books and from my observation of the devotees, I began to appreciate that they had a powerful philosophy. From my first two or three days at the temple, I could under-

stand that there were different types of devotees, some were genuine and some were not. From those devotees who seriously followed the philosophy, I could understand the power of their teachings. The more I studied, the more I challenged, which of course is the nature of Krsna consciousness. As the investigation deepens, the power of the philosophy shines through. Since I could not get around this knowledge, I joined.

Seek Special Mercy

This story again emphasizes the power of the congregational chanting of the holy name—an unusual activity for this material world. My experience also shows Krsna's many ways to keep away certain living entities who are not properly situated or ready to take advantage of the philosophy. Although this philosophy is for everyone, one must have a certain amount of *ajnata-sukrti* or at least special mercy in order to directly participate. Without these factors, the average person on the planet cannot come close despite the availability of the philosophy. Many individuals will receive some benediction from taking *prasadam* or hearing the holy name but they will not be able to come so close. Many aspects of the philosophy will simply bewilder them, such as *maha-visnu's* activities of creation. The scriptures describe that He lies down on the Causal Ocean and unlimited universes emanate from His body as He breathes in and out. As He inhales and exhales just once, trillions and trillions of years pass. Beyond

these unbelievable activities, He appears in different incarnations as blue, yellow, white and green. Then we hear of Lord Brahma, a small attendant of Lord Visnu who has four heads and lives for 311 trillion years. Lord Siva, another attendant, actually dances to destroy the universe. We hear that God comes as Matsya, the fish *avatara*, as Kurma, the tortoise *avatara*, and even as Lord Varaha, a boar *avatara*. The reality of this philosophy is absolutely phenomenal. These teachings are completely outside of normal consciousness, showing both the difficulty as well as the exalted level of such philosophy. Now consider how we, as devotees, have accepted all of these extraordinary things. We accept that every morning we receive great benediction and blessings from dancing around a little tree and putting a few drops of water on the dirt. This is amazing. Lord Caitanya has descended to show us how to become devotees, understanding the difficulties for the conditioned souls who are captured by the material energy. Our senses and minds will remain blocked unless we receive this extra help. In my case, my mind would have been blocked so Krsna just tricked me and arranged to bring me through the back door. I had to go through all this psychological, psychic and mental jugglery to finally come to the point of accepting this deeper truth and simply appreciating *bhakti*.

As we examine our individual lives, we notice that Krsna arranged the exact situation necessary for each of us to make a connection to this process.

Maybe your best friend started coming, your husband or wife brought you along, or you just happened to get a book at a specific time. For others, you began to feel existential, questioning everything, and then you happened to meet the devotees or hear them speak. So many different circumstances are possible but Krsna arranges the necessary situations for each individual. The distribution of the holy name actually gives devotional credits to many individuals who either have no credits or who lack sufficient credits to make the connection. Although there are so many people and so many temples, only a few will come for *darsana* of the Deities. Consequently, we must use the other methods to bring the Deities to the people or bring the Deities' mercy to the people in the form of *prasadam* or the holy name. In this way, we can extend ourselves and extend the mercy of the Lord. Lord Caitanya eagerly wants to make this process more available, especially for the unqualified. Therefore, His very first presentation from His great treasure, the *Siksastaka* prayers, refers directly to the holy name of the Lord.

The Process of Devotional Service

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura also have many important points to share on these eight *slokas* and on *harinama-sankirtana*. Srila Bhaktivinoda has probed the profundities of these prayers through his *Sri Sanmodana Bhasyam* or commentary to the *Sri Siksastaka* and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta has further

elaborated on these aphorisms through his own *viṛti* or commentary. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta states:

“There are innumerable ways to execute devotional service; the Śrīmad-Bhagavatam and the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa have described many of them. Broadly speaking, some sixty-four limbs of devotional service are considered the main disciplines or processes of bhakti-yoga. They are all grouped under the categories of vaidhī-bhakti (devotional service according to rules and regulations) and rāganuga-bhakti (spontaneous devotional service). In Śrīmad-Bhagavatam, Prahlaḍa Mahārāja especially glorifies pure spontaneous devotional service. As Lord Gaurasundara has said: ‘The congregational chanting of the holy name of the Lord is the most perfect form of devotional service.’”

Śrī Siksastaka, 11-12

These 64 tenets are the activities in devotional service, which will gradually bring us to the stages of *bhava* and *prema*. Of these 64 *angas*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta explains the chief importance of *nama-sankīrtana*. These points can help us better appreciate that Śrīla Prabhupāda inaugurated this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement through the usage of this

particular spiritual weapon, sankirtana. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura continues:

“Imperfect chanting of Krsna’s name is unable to cause the optimum spiritual change in the living entities. This will lead them to doubt the potency of kirtana. Therefore, let the complete and perfect chanting of Krsna’s holy name, or nama-sankirtana, be victorious...By chanting the name of Sri Krsna, one achieves supra-mundane perfection. Seven of the perfections specially related to chanting Lord Krsna’s holy name are mentioned in this sloka.”

Sri Siksastaka, 12-13

Verse 1

Cleansing the Mirror of the Heart

*ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-maha-
davagni-nirvapanam
sreyah-kairava-candrika-vitaranam
vidya-vadhu-jivanam*

*anandambudhi-varadhanam prati-padam
purnamrtasvadanam*

*sarvatma-snapanam param vijayate
sri-krsna- sankirtanam*

*“Glory to the sri-krsna-sankirtana,
which cleanses the heart of all the
dust accumulated for years and
extinguishes the fire of conditional
life, of repeated birth and death.
This sankirtana movement is the
prime benediction for humanity at
large because it spreads the rays of
the benediction moon. It is the life
of all transcendental knowledge. It
increases the ocean of transcendental*

bliss, and it enables us to fully taste the nectar for which we are always anxious.”

The first phrase, *ceto-darpana-marjanam*, means the cleansing of the mirror of the heart. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta explains that the dust of material contamination thoroughly covers the mirror of the heart of the conditioned soul, but the chanting of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s name cleanses this mirror. The heart is a very special organ in the body. It is phenomenal that the heart pumps nearly 2,000 gallons of blood in one day. Furthermore, the soul resides in the same region as the heart. When people undergo heart transplants, they often experience alterations in their personalities. These changes appear distinctly in some people since the consciousness is seated in the heart area and the subtle energy is constantly circulated throughout the body by the blood. Blood transfusions can also result in alterations of consciousness. Even the clothes of another person subtly carry their energy. People are constantly engaged in energy transfers. We pick up different energies simply by walking into another house or environment. For instance, the *Bhagavatam* explains that if one eats in a sinful place, one will pick up some of the sin from the atmosphere. The thoughts and actions of people permeate their environments. The consciousness of the cooks enters the food and especially the grains. We do not have to wonder why people experience so much

trouble in the material energy. Everywhere they turn, they constantly get “zapped.” Fast food restaurants are even more mechanical and gross due to the type of ingredients, and especially due to the consciousness of the cooks who usually receive only minimum wage and hate their jobs. Furthermore, the environment is filled with passionate people who are angry, disturbed, frustrated, lusty and depressed. Then, you enter and sit in the middle of this energy while the waiter or waitress brings you a plate of sin. Although they may smile at you and say, “Enjoy,” they are simply thinking, “Get out of here!” They have just served 100 people and feel exhausted. Although they ask how you enjoyed your meal, they just want to see your tip, and if you left only a small amount, they practically curse you as you walk out the door. They angrily think to themselves, “You took all of my time and simply see me as your slave. What can I do with this tip? I cannot even put gas in my car with this!” Consequently, the sin from the environment completely weighs you down; therefore, we need to chant the holy names, which cut away at the atmosphere and eradicate heavy contamination.

The contamination we pick up from these different environments must be cleansed. We constantly pick up something from our environment just as we may pick up a cold or flu on the bus or train. Often we travel around in contaminated airplanes, which pack hundreds of people into one little space for hours. Their mentalities and anxieties come from all different places and just bounce off the walls

back onto us. These airplanes even subject us to the unnatural consequences of radiation, electromagnetic effects, and the pressure from accelerating and decelerating. The body was not designed to ascend to such heights or descend so rapidly. The more modern airplanes have started to re-circulate the air for efficiency, which means that the older planes are actually healthier than the more modern ones. Some pilots are becoming impotent due to that atmosphere and have even filed lawsuits. Considering these artificial impositions, we can understand how such situations lead to airport rage, school rage, road rage, office rage and even executive rage. When someone enters their office, they see computers and machines everywhere! It seems that people are becoming more and more disturbed, especially in America and Europe. Much of the disturbances result from electromagnetic influences. For example, in countries like South Africa and Japan, practically everyone has a cell phone. Even a small five-year-old girl may make a few phone calls and ask, "What kind of candy does the store in your neighborhood sell? I don't like the candy from this store." It is amazing to see everyone with personal phones. Although we use all these fax machines, computers, cell phones and other electromagnetic appliances, we should understand that they are not natural and even affect our nervous system and our minds. This energy bombards people's existence, causing them to feel more tense, anxious and passionate. Many people will even develop sicknesses, which are difficult to repel, due to this energy.

Protecting Ourselves with the Holy Name

The holy names help to cleanse us of all these contaminations constantly attacking us. When someone approaches us with a mundane conversation and speaks offensively or gossips, it is as if they are dumping a barrel of garbage on us. Devotees communicate about everything, but if a relationship only involves dumping garbage, just ask the person: "I am glad to share, but can we take the conversation to a higher level?" If they continue to share such garbage, we really have to endeavor to cleanse ourselves, which requires a good amount of time and energy. If we constantly get dumped on at work, on the streets while preaching, at home or elsewhere, we can expect that our consciousness will feel very dismal. We will even lose excitement about the devotional process. Some of the assaults will be unavoidable because, as we move about in different environments, people will attack us consciously or unconsciously. Everything involves the socialization of energies. For this reason, even one moment in the association of very advanced souls can cleanse us to such an extent that it plants a seed that can nourish us and help us eternally with our growth. You may feel surcharged after visiting different places of pilgrimage or after receiving nice senior association. You will feel different for a few days because they actually affect the atmosphere by bringing cleansing and clarification. Their presence helps to make alterations in what you are carrying and what you are experiencing. However, as time passes, the regular

contamination begins to bombard you again and you return to business as usual. When the senior devotees come, everyone is on their best behavior and even smile at each other although sometimes they cannot stand one another. They think, "I can handle this for a week during their visit." Then, for one week, everyone comes to the morning program and chants together. Actually, the senior devotees make a difference when they come because they bring a different kind of energy into the atmosphere. For this reason, we need to be more mindful in order to capture the full presence and blessings of the senior devotee, the presence of our *guru*, and to even more deeply capture the presence of what we read. We want to maintain these reflections so that they always stay with us.

Sometimes you may listen to a stimulating lecture, which helps you feel better in your services. You need to hold onto these reflections and let them live with you, not only for that moment, but constantly, so that they bring solace. These reflections can help you feel more cared for and protected, and help you understand the purpose of all the different types of austerities. These are actually heavy austerities. We are in the minority—everyone around us acts and speaks differently. Therefore, when we attend class or read from the scriptures, we should try to be mindful in order to absorb and imbibe the knowledge into our being. Then, when the bombardments face us, they will not affect us to the same degree. We will have the ability to shake them off. When we

spend extensive time in the city, we become accustomed to the air pollution, the noise pollution and the electromagnetic pollution. However, if we spend some time in a rural environment and later return to the city, we will experience quite a difference. Some people work with different types of healing and are sensitive to the energies; therefore, they can identify those people who live in the cities due to the extra tension in the muscles and in the nervous system. This tension results from their day-to-day experiences. Prabhupada said that the cities are in the mode of passion, while the rural areas are in the mode of goodness. An environment helps to create a certain level of consciousness, and although we can avoid some of the influences, in general the environment can capture us. For this reason, it is good for those who live in the cities to take a walk in the park or forest or even visit a farm in order to leave these heavy energy exchanges. We can even see how people will unconsciously park their cars close to water, trees or greenery just to cool off. They may feel so uptight or anxious but the change in atmosphere seems to have a cleansing effect on them since it lacks the dominant presence of *Kali-yuga*. We see that Kṛṣṇa lives in Vṛndāvana. The *gopas* do not go out to the factories, but they go to the forest and take care of the cows. It is not only a simple life but also a natural life.

The “Dust” that Covers the Soul

These examples of the ways in which the material

energy constantly bombards us should help us to understand the contamination present on the mirror of our hearts. Just imagine a mirror completely covered by dust. Normally we can see our own image in a mirror, but the dust brings obfuscation and prevents us from seeing our own reflection clearly. This dust covers the soul. "Chanting Lord Krsna's name cleanses the mirror of the conditioned soul's polluted heart, which is wholly covered by three contaminations, namely material desires, the enjoying spirit, and ungodly atheistic activities" (*Sri Siksastaka, 13*). In other words, the dust that covers the soul comes in three forms and keeps the soul conditioned. This first type of dust is *anyabhilasa*, or desires separate from Krsna's desires. The living entities that have become adverse to the Lord are filled with desires separate from the interest of God. *Phala-bhoga*, the second type of dust, means the enjoyment of worldly activities, or attachment to worldly or fruitive activities along with their results. The third covering, *phala-tyaga*, is almost the opposite. *Phala-tyaga* means that one practices renunciation but not for the pleasure of the Lord. One can be improperly attached but one can also be improperly renounced. Not only can improper desires cover us over with improper activities and attachments, but they can also cause us to unnecessarily renounce certain things or renounce with the wrong intentions. One may practice renunciation just for glory, distinction and adoration, or engage in *tapasya* simply for power. Even Ravana and Jarasandha

were very powerful. They both performed many different types of rituals but for improper reasons. Both improper attachment and improper renunciation can contaminate the heart. Our activities must be performed with the proper consciousness and with the proper goals. As previously described, these three contaminations of dust cover the mirror of our heart and cause our conditioning. However, the chanting cleanses the heart of all the dust accumulated after years and years of such conditioning. "These treacherous contaminations cover the mirror of consciousness and cause the *jiva* to reject his true nature" (*Sri Siksastaka*, 13). Such contaminations are different types of deceit or *kaitava* which cover the *jiva's* actual vision of its true identity. Once this dust is cleansed away, the vision and the natural activities of the soul can be fully expressed. Only then will we completely appreciate our position as Krsna's servants. At this point, we become all for Krsna and Krsna becomes all for us.

While we chant these prayers each morning, we should simultaneously reflect on these points since the eight verses literally contain everything necessary to become fully Krsna conscious. We read many books and engage in so many activities mainly to help us control the mind, but these eight *slokas* contain everything. Lord Caitanya did not write many books because there was actually no need. He came to give the highest truth in the most simplistic, direct and potent way. If we perform a daily or periodic exercise of trying to go deeper and

deeper into the meaning of these *slokas*, we will discover that everything else we can read about, hear about or experience is contained within them. We need to learn so much since our minds and intelligence are such rascals. We actually want to trick the mind and intelligence by occupying them with devotional thoughts and reflections while undergoing the cleansing process. To the extent that our minds and intelligence are strong and powerful, we must learn to tame the wild mind just as one tames a wild horse. If a wild horse is not tamed, it will knock everything down, kick everyone and even run away. Due to its wild nature, it must come under great surveillance and monitoring until it decides to cooperate and recognize its boss. We have to go through so many rituals and study simply because our intelligence is devious and hyperactive. If we just chant the holy name with purity and potency, everything will be revealed. However, sometimes we have to hear more and even undergo certain experiences in order to take deeper shelter of the holy name. Ultimately, in Krsna consciousness we only need the *maha-mantra*, but before we can chant the names of Radha and Krsna and chant this message imported from the spiritual world, *golokera prema-dhana hari-nama-sankirtana*, we have to build up so much. From this perspective, we can realize what goes on in Krsna consciousness. Living entities from time immemorial have been finding expert ways to deny reality, expert ways to run away from their real identity and expert ways to minimize and deny Krsna's love. Krsna arranges through scriptures,

sadhus, gurus, plenary expansions, partial plenary expansions, incarnations, *avataras*, and even through His own personal presence to somehow encourage us to give up the unnecessary and reach out for the obvious truth we hide from.

For these reasons, Lord Caitanya comes Himself. Advaita Acarya and Narada Muni call Him, letting Him know that this is a serious time. The rascals in *Kali-yuga* need special mercy because they will not expend the effort to meditate, and even if they do, their minds will be everywhere. They will not be fixed in temple worship or *yajnas*, and although they will pretend, their minds will be in other places. Consequently, the Lord gives a process that can still benefit the people despite the wandering mind. Although the mind, the will and the emotions are all over the place, somehow there will still be a chance for advancement. Just by chanting the holy name in various environments, even those who have no interest can receive benedictions. Even those who are not very serious can still act as ambassadors to spread the chanting of the holy names. Therefore, as they chant, they purify themselves and other entities while distributing the mercy to those who may be more destitute or insane than them. In this way, everyone will receive some blessings. Everyone on this planet is very fortunate due to the availability of the holy names, but some may take full advantage and be able to return to the spiritual kingdom. While repeating this verse, we can reflect on the mirror conception and the need to cleanse the dust from the mirror or heart.

Extinguishing the Fire of Material Existence

The second phrase, *bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam*, means extinguishing the blazing forest fire of material existence. The senses are on fire and this material world is burning due to the many different types of suffering. The living entities in this material world experience three different types of suffering called *adhyatmika*, *adhidaivika*, and *adhibhautika*. *Adhyatmika* refers to the suffering caused by one's own mind. Then one suffers *adhidaivika*; miseries caused by the demigods in the form of heat, cold, earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, etc. Finally, one suffers endless miseries from other living entities, *adhibhautika*. Even from a small mosquito bite, we can undergo so much suffering and even die. During one trip to Africa I became very ill. I traveled to Botswana to have a meeting with the President of the country and nearly died from one little mosquito with malaria. My whole system was completely thrown off due to fever, weakness and hallucinations. This suffering occurs as a result of the harassment of other living entities. In this material body, endless onslaughts of suffering constantly disturb us. Since our position in these material bodies is very dangerous, we want protection and shelter. We want to discover the escape route because, in time, the fire will totally absorb everything including our own existence. We are on fire due to our wild senses. If someone is on fire and comes into the environment, they can burn others or even ignite another object. When

someone is too captured by sense gratification, they are just as dangerous as this fire, because they can ignite others or increase the fire like a contagious disease. However, this chanting of the holy name extinguishes the blazing fire of material suffering and material existence. One is literally on fire due to frustrations, anxieties and gloom, but the chanting of the holy name gives a cooling effect just as a sprinkler system pours water when smoke appears.

Spreading the Highest Benediction

The next phrase, *sreyah-kairava-candrika-
vitaranam*, means that the *sankirtana* movement spreads the highest benediction. We went from the blazing forest fire to the process of spreading the highest benediction through *nama-sankirtana*.

*“Whole hearted chanting of Lord
Krsna’s holy name is the highest
goodness and munificence. Sreyah
means ‘benediction’, kairava means
‘white lilies’, and candrika are ‘the
rays of the moon.’”*

Sri Siksastaka, 14

In other words, the soothing rays of the moon affect the white lilies, which then blossom and become even more effulgent and beautiful. This refers to the chanting of the holy name. The white lily represents the devotional creeper and the rays of the moon represent the chanting, which gives

nourishment to the creeper, making it beautiful and effulgent. In this way, the chanting spreads the highest benediction. Improper desires cannot lead to good fortune; however, once the *anyabhilasa*, or improper desires change, we move to this level.

The Life of All Transcendental Knowledge

All of the topics of discussion from this first verse focus on congregational chanting, which results in these seven types of perfection. The fourth perfection is *vidya-vadhu-jivanam* or the life of all transcendental knowledge. "The *Mundaka Upanisad* mentions two types of knowledge: material and transcendental." *Laukika vidya* is material knowledge and *para vidya* is transcendental knowledge. Material knowledge gives information about the separated energies of the Lord:

*bhumir apo 'nalo vayuh
kham mano buddhir eva ca
ahankara itiyam me
bhinna prakrtir astadha*

*"Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind,
intelligence and false ego—all together
these eight constitute My separated
material energies."*

Bhagavad-gita 7.4

The chanting gives us the life of all transcendental knowledge and the holy name contains all aspects

of transcendence, far surpassing all material knowledge.

Increasing the Ocean of Transcendental Bliss

The fifth perfection, *anandambudhi-varadhanam*, increases the ocean of transcendental bliss. Lord Caitanya does not refer to a puddle or a river, but specifically describes the chanting as a tremendous ocean of transcendental bliss for the living beings. "Only a vast expanse of water is called an ocean, nothing less; therefore unlimited bliss has been rightly compared to an ocean."

Tasting Nectar at Every Step

Number six, *prati-padam purnamrtasvadanam*, means that the chanting enables us to taste the nectar at every step. We can taste the nectar that always awaits us. The living entity perpetually feels anticipation, knowing that somewhere there is something greater and even more wonderful. Although we have so many experiences, we often feel something is missing and hope for something sweeter. Just as a fish out of water cannot feel proper until it returns to its natural situation, a conditioned soul will not feel fully satisfied until it can also return to its natural position. *Nama-sankirtana* fulfills this purpose by enabling us to taste the nectar, which is available at every step.

Bathing the Living Entities

The last line says *sarvatma-snapanam*, which

means the holy name completely bathes the body, the mind and the *atma*.

"The subtle and gross contaminations attendant upon the material conception of life have quite devoured the spiritual soul, but these material diseases can at once be terminated by chanting the holy name. When the soul released from his material designations is eager to reach Lord Krsna, he engages in devotional service under the cooling shade of Lord Krsna's lotus feet."

Sri Siksastaka, 15

Srila Jiva Gosvami writes in the *Bhakti-sandarbha* (273), and in the *Krama-sandarbha*:

*ata eva yady apyanya bhaktih kalau
kartavya*

tada kirtanakhya-bhakti-samyogenaiva

"This means that although it is required in *Kali-yuga* to practice the eight limbs of devotional service, they have to be performed in conjunction with chanting" (*Sri Siksastaka, 15*). If a practitioner executes all the eight limbs which include *sravanam*, *smaranam*, *pada-sevanam*, *arcanam*, *vandanam*, *dasyam*, *sakhyam* and *atma-nivedanam* in conjuc-

tion with *kirtana* or the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, *bhakti* will fully manifest.

Questions & Answers

Question: Lord Caitanya spoke about the fire of material existence. Could you elaborate on this topic?

Answer: Yes, it is simple. Often, the senses force one to act in direct opposition to the mind and intelligence. They are constantly stimulated and agitated due to contact with sense objects. Lord Caitanya along with Srila Prabhupada, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura all give this understanding and describe the senses as a blazing fire. We are in an emergency situation because a fire leads to devastation and destruction. The fire is intense and capable of burning everything in its path. The senses act in this way and have great power to agitate us.

Question: Can this relate to the verse which describes how one is impelled to act sinfully as if by force?

Answer: Yes. That is the lust. Lust actually causes the coverings but the contaminations such as improper desires, fruitive activities and even artificial renunciation are all a part of lust. Love is proper and lust is the opposite of love, so Lord Caitanya has given us the key to convert lust into love—energy transference.

Question: The vibration of the *mantra* is really an internal connection because if we watch someone hearing the *mantra* for the first time, they may like the beat or find themselves dancing and singing without even understanding the significance.

Answer: This response may happen if they are pious. Some people hear the *mantra* and want to run away or even want to push the person down. Some people get so disturbed from this chanting; however, other people might hear the *mantra* and feel very inspired. Certain people hear the chanting and will continue singing the *mantra* throughout the entire day.

Question: Are you saying that the chanting can actually invoke some demoniac energy?

Answer: Yes. A very sinful person who comes into contact with anything related to transcendence will become angry, disturbed or bothered. On the other hand, a pious individual who sees a beautiful picture of Krsna will feel a sense of well-being and feel captivated or curious. Another individual might hear the holy name, see a picture of Krsna or hear of His qualities and pastimes, but become angry or even violent.

Question: Could this negative reaction be a type of purging of the demoniac energy inside them? If they could just stay with it, would they get purified?

Answer: Yes. If they stay, they will definitely get purified. We can compare the situation to a thief. If a thief is trying to rob the bank, the last person they want to see is the policeman. This would completely interfere with their entire program. Someone who wants to be God certainly wants to deny any knowledge in connection with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The demonic want their own senses and desires to be supreme and want to have the power of the Godhead. Therefore, anything godly becomes threatening and disturbing, causing an inimical reaction.

Question: This is a point that causes me trouble. On the one hand, I believe in my heart that at the core of our beings we are all eternal spirit souls, servants of Kṛṣṇa, and loving entities. On the other hand, a part of me believes that some people walking around are just not right. I have a really hard time integrating or holding that belief, because I want to be able to see even the murderer as a pure soul who is really lost.

Answer: That is a nice question and you have actually already explained the answer yourself in the question. Ultimately, everyone is a part of God and the soul is pure but the problems arise due to the coverings. The main problem is penetrating the coverings.

Question: Are there actually demons and Vaisnavas? Are there souls that are just evil? Is that possible?

Answer: There are demons, demoniac energy and demoniac influence. There are also saintly souls, saintly personalities and blessings from such personalities. Everything is personal, but there is the *saktiman* and the *sakti* or energy. Krsna is personal; however, He also has His different energies such as *bahiranga*, *tatastha*, *antaranga*, etc. So, there are actual demons, and there are the negative energies or influences from those demons.

Question: Can demons become devotees?

Answer: No one is ever too deep in *maya* that they cannot be helped. Even the greatest demon cannot defeat Krsna's love. No *maya* can be greater than Krsna. Even the most sinful and degraded individual can always be helped. However, at our state of awareness, we have to be able to perceive danger in certain associations. Although we want to be caring and loving, we can feel disturbed with people for their sinful actions or for actions that they perpetuate in others.

Question: Since *harinama-sankirtana* is so important, why do our temples not engage in this process as much anymore? When I first joined, some devotees would actually go out every single day for *sankirtana* but now the devotees do not go out as much.

Answer: Everything is connected to the idea of chanting the Lord's name. Many devotees do not even chant *japa*.

Other devotees have a fear about engaging in *bhajana* or *kirtana* together. As an introverted person, I experienced this myself but I act differently in the interest of service. However, until I became a *sannyasi*, I never danced in any *kirtana*. It was not in my nature to be so outgoing. Then I began to realize that the chanting and dancing is not an ordinary affair; rather, this activity is an offering to the Lord as well as a connection with souls. Even as a materialist, I just never danced. As a spiritualist, I thought, "What is this, all this moving and dancing around? What do they think, that spiritual life is some kind of wild disco? They're blowing my cool! I just want to be meditative." It just seemed too overt and unrelated to spiritual life but actually, every day I would see the pictures of Lord Caitanya with His hands raised, dancing and singing with drums and *karatalas*. Even this first *sloka* talks about dancing. However, Prabhupada would get disturbed if we danced too wildly, not due to ecstasy but due to improper consciousness. We have to be careful because sometimes the dancing gets a little "funky." Devotees can even have accidents. Several years ago in Mayapur, some devotees were wildly throwing each other in the air during *kirtana* and actually hurt themselves.

We should understand that the *yajna* for this age includes congregational chanting in front of the

Deities, *japa*, *bhajan*as and *harinama-sankirtana*. By diving deeper into the idea of calling on Kṛṣṇa's name, we can make this aspect of the spiritual world more of a reality for us. In these pictures of Lord Caitanya, we always see drums, *karatalas*, singing and dancing. Basically, the spiritual world is an eternal party and one never tires of the eternal dance. Although we have different natures and inclinations, the idea is that we should always chant the holy name in all the possible ways.

When we begin to minimize the most essential aspects of devotional life, we will start to substitute them with other forms of sense gratification and become again attracted to sensual stimulation. Śrīla Prabhupada has passed these specific formulas down through the *Vaiṣṇava* line for a very special reason—the process works. When we minimize the process, we will gradually minimize different aspects of devotional life and soon lose the taste for chanting. We will lose the taste to see the Deities or to engage in any congregational activity. It is delicate. Minimizing certain activities makes it difficult to perform them on a regular basis. For instance, every day we shower as a natural habit, but if we get into the habit of showering one day a week, after a while it would become hard to return to our original standard of cleanliness. Once we fall into a pattern, it becomes more difficult to escape. Somebody may stop smoking but gradually begin again once a week and then twice a week. Once we make certain limits and follow them, they become regular parts of our lives. Of course this is hard due to the material

body. It is hard to rise early in the morning and do anything. We might prefer to sleep until 9 o'clock or even sleep for 12 hours. There are only 24 hours in a day, which means that some individuals sleep half of their lives away. It is an austerity to wake up early, take a shower, chant *japa* and come to class. However, when we fall away from the routine, the program will become even harder to follow. Some devotees rarely come to the temple, only once or twice a week, and during the entire year they may only go into the temple room once or twice. Although they may appreciate the social association of the devotees, they lose the mood of really honoring the Deities and honoring the chanting of the holy name. They may come to a program and honor *prasadam* but fail to see the Deities. Soon, everything loses its importance and just the thought of involving themselves more seems almost repulsive.

Maya plays many games. If we really want to learn, we can even learn from a new *bhakta* giving class. At the very least, the *bhakta* will read the verse and explain certain points from some level of sincerity. If we want to learn, we can learn. If we cannot hear from anyone except our *guru* or a *sannyasi*, it means that our hearing is very mediocre despite our own high opinion of ourselves. We are to be the servant of the servant. The next verses of the *Siksastaka* will explain that we should not want any number of followers or aspire after profit, distinction or adoration. We should be able to learn from even the ant. We have many different types of *gurus* to learn from in our environment. We can even learn

from a sinful person by examining their nonsense and the terrible effects. If we are really sincere to learn, everything in the environment can teach us. When we miss the deep culture, we will only be able to hear or learn from certain situations or environments. This is unfortunate.

We need to watch these kinds of patterns and try to appreciate the simplicity, purity and profundity of Krsna consciousness. These patterns can be very dangerous. We have all experienced different periods of ease and periods of difficulty, but once we begin to minimize the essential activities, *maya* will really attack. In boxing, one boxer may notice the other fighter weakening. At this point, he tries to deliver even more blows, because he sees that the opponent is weak. As soon as *maya* sees some weakness, she will immediately come in and finish us off. *Maya* sees a devotee not chanting their rounds, and this provides her with an opportune moment to bring in so many material desires and finish the devotee.

Question: But why? Krsna made *maya* so why would He do that?

Answer: *Maya* is actually Krsna's great friend, great supporter and great servant. Krsna brings you in by calling you and *maya* has her own way to bring you in. *Maya* tries to beat you to ultimately push you towards Krsna and Krsna tries to call us. We can be stubborn and let *maya* beat us, or come to Krsna's calling. It is all Krsna's love.

Verse 2

Our Unfortunate Position

*namnam akari bahudha nija-sarva-saktis
tatrarpita niyamitah smarane na kalah
etadrsi tava krpa bhagavan mamapi
durdaivam idrsam ihajani nanuragah*

*“O my Lord, Your holy name alone
can render all benediction to living
beings, and thus You have hundreds
and millions of names, like Krsna
and Govinda. In these transcendental
names You have invested all Your
transcendental energies. There are
not even hard and fast rules for
chanting these names. O my Lord,
out of kindness You enable us to
easily approach You by Your holy
names, but I am so unfortunate that I
have no attraction for them.”*

This second *sloka* emphasizes one’s incompetence or lack of ability to take up the chanting. *Durdaivam*, a significant word in this verse, refers to

one's misfortune. This verse emphasizes the power of the holy name while simultaneously recognizing the misfortune of the living entities that lack the ability to use, appreciate or fully experience its true nature. This is the position of an aspiring devotee—they can see the activities in the environment, but due to some limitations, cannot fully engage themselves. This is similar to a person with a handicap—maybe they cannot walk or talk, or they may suffer from some serious complexities in their physical and mental states. The activities exist in a normal sense but the disabled individual cannot fully participate. Our experience as aspiring devotees relates to this example. We chant but we cannot fully experience the holy name even though everything is present. It's like being at a feast with your favorite preparations but you feel sick or nauseous. Although the food is available, you have no appetite. This situation is very sad because the fortune is accessible but we cannot fully experience it.

Although Kṛṣṇa gives us everything through the holy name, even this may seem too much of an imposition. After executing the process in a mechanical way without faith and without experiencing any nectar, we may lose our conviction and even our interest in pursuing the goal. For instance, a doctor may prescribe a certain medication, but if we do not follow the prescription properly, we will not receive the results and will quickly lose interest in the medicine. Sometimes this is the case. We may have chanted for a period of time and think, "I have been

chanting for so many years and I still have material desires and bad habits. What is the point of all this chanting?" Our treasure is available but something prevents us from receiving it. This is *durdaivam*.

We are All Crazy

Let us look at another example. Imagine you visit an old friend at his house and find him running around on all fours like a dog. You try to talk to him and snap him out of this strange state, but he just barks at you and grabs the leg of your pants. You ask, "What are you doing? What has happened to you? I'm your friend!" but he simply remains absorbed in his own situation. Even though he has the capacity to change his consciousness and communicate, due to a mental breakdown, stress or drugs, he is completely disturbed and stuck in the consciousness of a dog. The higher entities or those of a higher consciousness see our situation in this way and understand our misfortune. Although the great fortune is before us, we have allowed an unnecessary barrier to exist, and convinced ourselves that we cannot penetrate it. The living entity under the different modes of material nature is in this predicament. Even the residents of the higher planetary systems, who are still incarcerated themselves by certain aspects of the modes, look at the lower realms and see the activities as ridiculous, absurd and even bestial. What makes the living entity so unfortunate? The misfortune basically results from *aparadhas* or offenses.

Just imagine an unclean, drunk person who enters the temple with shoes on and creates all types of disturbances. The person is loud, obnoxious and boisterous. The temple is a holy place and the mercy is available through the *darsana* of the Deities, the classes on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* or *Bhagavad-gita*, the association of the devotees, and through *prasadam*. However, in their present state, they cannot experience or access the mercy because their obnoxious behavior will force us to carefully escort the individual out the door. Although the disturbance is a problem, their offensive behavior in such an environment is an even greater problem because they will harm themselves on a deeper level. They will commit offenses and later suffer the consequences. We may give them *prasadam*, but we cannot let them remain in the spiritual sanctuary. This person is quite unfortunate because they have a chance for fortune but cannot catch it.

The Power of Chanting

The second *sloka* expresses this mood of lamentation. Although we have so many opportunities to advance, we simply act rudely, faithlessly and offensively. The following *sastric* quotes relate to the potency of chanting and the availability of fortune that one cannot fully access.

*sakrd-uccaritam yena harir-ity
aksara-dvayam*

*baddah parikaras-tena moksaya
gamanam prati*

“Those who are free from all offenses, and who utter even once, the two syllables, Hari, become resolute to obtain liberation from material existence and service at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

*Padma Purana, Uttar Khanda,
Chapter 46*

*tad asma-saram hrdayam batedam
yad grhyamanair hari-nama-dheyaih
na vikriyetatha yada vikaro
netre jalam gatra-ruhesu harsah*

“Certainly that heart is steel-framed which, in spite of one’s chanting the holy name of the Lord with concentration, does not change when ecstasy takes place, tears fill the eyes and the hairs stand on end.”

Srimad-Bhagavatam, 2.3.24

*madhura-madhuram-etan-mangalam
mangalanam*

sakala-nigama-valli-sat-phalam cit-svarupam

sakrd-api parigitam sraddhaya helaya va

*bhrgu-vara nara-matram tarayeta
krsna-nama*

“O respectable Bhrgu! This holy name of Sri Krsna is sweeter than the sweetest honey. Amongst all that is auspicious, it stands supreme. It is the spotlessly pure, eternal, cognizant and fully ripened fruit of the desire tree of the Vedic literatures. If anyone chants the holy name even once, whether sincerely or casually, but without offenses, sri krsna-nama immediately delivers the chanter from material existence.”

*Hari Bhakti Vilasa, 11.451
Dhrta Prabhasa Khanda*

*gitva ca mama namani vicaren-mama
sannidhau*

*iti brabimi te satyam krito 'ham
tasya carjuna*

“O Arjuna! I declare this truth unto you that those who approach Me chanting My name certainly purchase Me. I become completely subservient to them.”

Adi Purana

Offenses Block Our Way

There are many similar references that emphasize what is possible and what is accessible but that our offenses, primarily *nama-aparadhas*, block our ability to receive. We do not need to wonder whether we make offenses since we constantly do; rather, it is a matter of the quantity of our *aparadhas*. Therefore, much of the process of *atma-vidya* examines the superfluous and unnecessary things in our lives and provides the means to rid us of them. We may think that we do not make offenses and instead look at the offenses of others, or we may think that the medicine does not work, but by this, we will miss the chance to take the medicine properly. When we understand that we commit many offenses that are simply being tolerated, we may appreciate the position of the drunken man who enters the temple room full of offenses. Although he can benefit from the environment, offenses contaminate practically all of his actions. The greatest misfortune for the drunkard is that he has come so close and could have benefited from this liberating situation, but instead he only harms himself due to his incarcerated and narcotized state. In our own situations, we make offenses that interfere or slow down our chance to receive the boons. However, as long as we do not become completely ridiculous, we will still make gradual progress.

Types of Offenses

There are different types of *aparadhas*. *Dhama-*

aparadhas or offenses committed in the holy places of pilgrimage are very serious and detrimental to the devotional creeper. The temple is considered a *dhama* or a place meant for spiritual worship, meditation and reflection. Such places carry very high potency and, because these places can offer such high blessings, if one does not behave properly, one can bring forth many complexities. *Seva-aparadha* is an offense made during the different kinds of services. You might perform a service but you come late and in an unclean state. Maybe you cook or engage in Deity service but in an offensive mood. Then there are offenses made against the devotees or *vaisnava-aparadha* and offenses against the spiritual master or *guru-aparadha*. Interestingly, when one continues committing a particular offense, it will inevitably lead to other offenses. Instead of remaining stagnant at a particular level, it develops like a cancerous growth into other offenses. For example, if someone continuously commits *vaisnava-aparadha* without compunction or restraint, the offense will inevitably grade into *guru-aparadha*, which will lead to doubting, questioning and even blaspheming Krsna Himself. One *aparadha* leads to another. Similarly, if one chants offensively with no regret or even stops chanting entirely, different complexities and sinful thoughts will inevitably begin to settle in the consciousness. Someone may feel capable of maintaining the same level without the chanting, but this only lasts temporarily due to previous experiences of chanting and

previous *sadhana*. For example, you may be unemployed now, but you can continue to eat due to your previous savings. Maybe you have some assets—a house or a bank account; however, if you do not replenish the savings account or assets, after a while, the money will gradually diminish. Later, the house will even begin to deteriorate with no money left for its maintenance. The way in which one activity supports another is very scientific. A strong activity in one area will bring out a strong connection in another. Conversely, a weakness will bring out the weakness in another area until a person becomes so unfortunate that they lose the ability to associate in spiritual environments. Our misfortune stems from *nama-aparadha*.

The Holy Name Frees Us From Our Offenses

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura states in his *Sri Bhajana-rahasya*:

“All the auspicious potencies—whether pious deeds, acts of charity, strict vows, penances, going on pilgrimage, asvamedha and rajasuya sacrifices, or knowledge of the Absolute—which nullify the effects of sinful life, have been assembled together by the Supreme Lord and channeled into His holy name, making it truly omnipotent.”

Lord Caitanya explains that Krsna feels some sadness or disturbance when He sees the living entity's intense degree of suffering. Consequently, He arranges to connect the living entity with His holy name. Even though one is unqualified and unlucky, especially in *Kali-yuga*, Krsna arranges to give something very powerful. Unfortunately, the living entity is similar to a drunkard in the temple and cannot properly receive. Bhaktivinoda Thakura also states in his *Gita-avali*:

"Like Your transcendental form, the holy name is sac-cid-ananda and it is superior even to touchstone (cintamani). You have distributed that touchstone-like hari-nama throughout the entire world. This is the topmost display of Your mercy. On the one hand, Your mercy is extremely generous and beyond compare, yet on the other hand, my misfortune is very great, for I have not even the slightest attraction towards the magnanimous name of Sri Krsna. Therefore, Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, 'My heart is overwhelmed with sadness, what shall I do? O Lord! Now I am simply waiting expectantly upon Your causeless mercy.'"

He recognizes that Krsna mercifully and freely

distributes His holy name, but feels that he has little attraction for the name.

Ten Offenses Against the Holy Name

There are ten offenses against the chanting of the holy name that prevent us from fully experiencing what is available. These ten offenses lead to the craziness that interferes and minimizes the potency of our chanting. After *mangala-arati* every morning, before we chant our rounds, we recite these ten offenses to remind ourselves that these offenses keep us crazy, and if we can rid ourselves of these *aparadhas*, we will no longer be unfortunate or unlucky. We will be able to experience this great fortune. As we examine the ten offenses, we can remind ourselves that the first words and the last words are most important. As a reminder, the first prayer of the *Sri Siksastaka* emphasizes the importance of congregational chanting and the very last verse of the *Bhagavatam* ends with the importance of *harinama-sankirtana*.

Blaspheming Devotees

The first offense is to blaspheme the devotees who have dedicated their lives to the propagation of the holy names of the Lord. Obviously, this is very serious. When one gives oneself to the Lord, the Lord gives Himself in return. Kṛṣṇa says that the pure devotee is His heart; therefore, to offend the devotee is to offend the Lord in the heart. We understand that much of devotional service is based on

mercy, and mercy comes from the carriers of mercy. Therefore, what hope is there for one who commits such offenses? Krsna does not give this high level of *bhakti* so freely, because it allows us to purchase Him fully. He gives it through His agents who are very dear to Him. When they make a plea or request on our behalf, then Krsna accommodates. If we offend His agents, how will we receive the mercy connection? Of course, the offense is proportionate to the level of purity of the offended devotee. If one offends an advanced devotee who is very dear to Krsna, the offense is much more serious.

Considering Demigods Equal to the Lord

Offense number two is to consider the names of the demigods like Lord Siva and Lord Brahma to be equal to or independent of the holy name of Lord Visnu. Why is this so important? Is Krsna just on an ego trip and ready to send hellfire and brimstone to anyone who considers another entity to be independent of Him? No. Since His position is so special as Krsna, the *adi-purusa*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, thinking of the demigods in this way will simply cause distraction. The demigods are great personalities, but they are not supreme and are not ultimately responsible for the totality of creation. In one sense, demigod worship is comparable to bribery, where one tries to subvert the legitimate connection. In this case, one may not be ready to fully honor the ultimate connection but still wants to receive the highest results from the lesser connec-

tion. This cheating mentality will not provide freedom from our insanities. So, the drunken man comes into the temple and this time he removes his shoes, but he still has so many other problems. Consequently, he still cannot catch up with the mercy and fortune that is available.

Disobeying the Spiritual Master

Offense number three is to disobey the orders of the spiritual master. Why is this an offense? After all, we are not offending Krsna, or are we? Krsna arranges this situation to let us practice. Just as a sportsman or musician needs to prepare for an event, we also need to prepare and practice. The spiritual master acts as the ambassador or the postman, and also acts as an element for our practice as we endeavor to cultivate more devotion and love for Krsna. In our contaminated state, we can no longer make that connection with Krsna, so the spiritual master trains us to become civil, to become human and to become spiritual. In his contaminated state, the drunkard is not ready to enter the temple, but if someone helps him and teaches him the proper behavior, one day he can come to the temple and remain in the environment. Just imagine this same analogy in relation to the conditioned soul. If we one day return to the spiritual world with our current mentality, perceptions, enviousness, lust and greed, we would simply create a disturbance. Since no imperfections can enter into the spiritual world, we have no right or ability to go to such a place. Just

examine the mind from day-to-day and consider the type of reflections that fill our minds and constantly bother us. From this analysis, we will discover our similarity to the drunkard who has so much fortune available but cannot experience it due to his absurdity and obnoxiousness. For this reason, we read about the possibilities and about these different types of offenses that prevent us from experiencing this great fortune.

Blaspheming Vedic Literature

Offense number four is to blaspheme the Vedic literatures or literatures in pursuance of the Vedic version. The scriptures are literary incarnations of God, Krsna, and are even worshipable. One can offer obeisances to these scriptures and even offer some *puja* as in Deity worship. For this reason, we do not read them with dirty hands or put them on the floor because they are spiritual. Krsna's words and Krsna's pastimes with the devotees are non-different from Krsna Himself. To blaspheme the Vedic literature is very destructive, because it is an assault on the Lord and His mercy.

Considering the Glories of Chanting to be Imagination

The fifth offense is to consider the glories of chanting the holy name to be imagination. In this case, one basically considers that the glories of the holy name are a lie, simply theoretical or not an actual reality. It corresponds with the sixth offense,

which is to give some mundane interpretation on the holy name of the Lord. Once one views the holy name as imaginary or unreal, one begins to create personal ideas, perceptions and speculations. These perverted conceptions contaminate it in the same way that a serpent contaminates milk through the touch of its mouth. Consequently, one's so-called knowledge becomes useless.

Committing Sinful Activities

The seventh offense is to commit sinful activities on the strength of chanting the holy name. For example, maybe the drunkard enters the temple with his obnoxious behavior and causes a disturbance, but this time he immediately apologizes. However, thirty seconds later he makes the same mistake, but again apologizes. Maybe he knocks over tulasi, tries to walk on the altar, touches Srila Prabhupada or tries to bother the women. He continues to apologize, but does not change his behavior. Finally, we have to apologize and ask him to leave. His apologies become ridiculous, because he is not sorry enough to change his behavior. He tries one behavior and when the devotees check him, he simply looks for some other obnoxious activity. He is exploiting the kindness of the devotees. The devotees give him some *prasadam* and he goes away but soon returns with the same nonsense behavior. It is very offensive to the atmosphere and even exploitative. It is very bad to play these games with the Lord, His environment, the devotees and the holy name. It is similar

to a person who commits a sin and thinks, “I can just chant some extra rounds and sin again and again.” The holy name is very powerful and gives great fortune, but this is a very unfortunate way to use it.

Considering Chanting to be Karma-Kanda

The eighth offense is to consider the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa as one of the auspicious, ritualistic activities offered in the Vedas as fruitive activities or *karma-kanda*. It is an offense to equate the chanting of the holy name to routine religion, penance, renunciation, sacrifice or any activity meant for material benefit. The chanting of the holy name is not oriented towards the heavenly kingdom or material piety. It is far beyond these material results. These thoughts are contaminated.

Preaching to the Faithless

The ninth offense is to preach the glories of the holy name to the faithless person. What does this mean to instruct a faithless person? It seems to be a contradiction because Lord Caitanya instructs us to preach the glories of the holy name in every town and village. Lord Caitanya gave knowledge, mercy and blessings to everyone, qualified or unqualified, so that everyone could have a chance to make some spiritual advancement. However, this ninth offense states that one should not instruct the faithless. This means that we give everyone a chance or an opportunity to receive, but if someone becomes

angry, offensive or violent, we should not try to give them more, because they will simply become more offensive. As we said earlier, they will have to suffer for their offenses. It is better to avoid preaching to such an offensive person, because they will simply become more entangled in their karmic reactions. For instance, you may try to help an alcoholic out of compassion, but as soon as you start talking with them, they become violent and begin cursing. At that point communication is impossible. If you try to continue the conversation, you will cause them to act more absurdly which will not be healthy for them. It is the duty of a devotee to always try to help raise the consciousness. If we cannot help, we surely do not want to bring harm. Therefore, one should carefully avoid such an offense.

Not Having Complete Faith

The tenth offense is to not have complete faith in the chanting of the holy name and to maintain material attachments even after understanding so many instructions on this matter. It is also an offense to be inattentive while chanting. It is an offense to not have complete faith in the holy name even after hearing so many, many instructions on this subject matter. This offense completely shows one's lack of qualification, because although one receives so much help and information, one stubbornly continues to reject and to minimize the potency. These are the blocks that cause our misfortune.

Understanding the Name

Krsna has invested all of His potencies into His holy name, as stated in the second *sloka*: “In these transcendental names You have invested all of Your transcendental energies.” In order to gain more clarity, let us define *nama* or the holy name. There are different categories of *nama*. *Mukhya* are the primary names and *gauna* are the secondary names. The primary names are also further separated into two categories, the *madhurya* related names and the *aisvarya* related names. The *madhurya* related names represent Krsna’s sweet, intimate, loving features associated with His confidential exchanges and pastimes in Vrndavana. The *aisvarya* names refer to Krsna as the opulent, powerful and all-dominating God. These names represent the Lord’s reverential aspect and His opulence. Krsna has invested all of His transcendental energies into these primary names or *mukhya*. In contrast to these names, we have the secondary names. Several examples of *mukhya* names that emphasize Krsna’s sweetness and intimate, loving affairs include Krsna, Govinda, Syamasundara, Damodara, Gopinatha and Kunjabihari. In the primary *madhurya* and *aisvarya* names, Krsna invests all of His potencies. This means that all *rasa*, all knowledge, all experiences, all fortune and all potencies are available in these names if we free ourselves from *aparadhas*. Several names of Krsna that represent His opulence and reverential aspect include Narayana, Nrsimhadeva, Visnu, Rama, Vasudeva, Paramatma, Allah, God, Yahweh and the

Creator. Although these are also personal names of God, they do not deal with the intimate *madhurya* aspect. All of the primary names carry Kṛṣṇa's full transcendental potencies, but the secondary names do not have this same potency. There will be some benefit from the secondary names but not in the same way. They are still names of the Lord but deal with general categories of greatness instead of specific pastimes of greatness.

This second *sloka* also emphasizes that there are no hard and fast rules for chanting these holy names. You can chant in the morning, in the evening, in the shower, in the park, in the temple, in your house or your car with the same full potency. However, the chanting should obviously be done attentively because inattentive chanting is also offensive. The potency is there but we must also observe our level of attentiveness. If we can chant more attentively in the mountains, such a situation might be better for us. If we chant more attentively on the corner, while walking, while sitting in the lotus position or while standing up, we can chant accordingly since there are no hard and fast rules. Some devotees chant more attentively while standing or walking because they might otherwise fall asleep. Other devotees can chant better while looking at a picture. Some devotees chant better if they think of one of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Some devotees chant more attentively while looking at a picture of their *guru*. There are no hard and fast rules. The idea is to dive deeper into the chanting.

Questions & Answers

Question: Lord Caitanya says: “I am so unfortunate that I have no attraction for the holy name.” I have never been able to truly understand this statement. How does seeing ourselves as unfortunate help us to advance?

Answer: We must look at our material situation with a certain amount of disgust in order to develop zeal to acquire the fortune of the holy name. For example, we may have some friends who we went to school with in the past, and we notice that they have succeeded in very wonderful ways. We engaged in similar activities and could have had the same achievements, but we lacked the necessary enthusiasm to make the most of the same opportunities. Consequently, we feel unfortunate. We should take the humble position. We do not lament in a hopeless and gloomy mood that keeps us stagnant; rather, we lament in the spirit of anticipation and eagerness to improve. Without this lamentation, we will complacently accept our fate and comfortably accept our position. The lamentation can act as a catalyst to increase our eagerness for that which we have not yet acquired.

Question: I was reflecting on the differences between the New Age movement and Krsna consciousness, realizing that *bhakti-yoga* is much more grounded and brings God into the picture. The New Age movement talks about the bliss and the expansiveness,

but it does not manifest here on earth. *Bhakti-yoga* brings the practice to a practical level. It involves service and work such as milking the cows and using the body, but simultaneously being filled with Krsna. I believe that it is culturally rich and very different from these New Age practices.

Answer: That is a nice realization. Much of the New Age movement deals with *mukti* or the idea of liberation and the desire to get “blissed-out” on God’s energies. It is actually a movement for spiritual intoxication rather than real love and service to God. It is still rather self-centered because one normally wants to experience, have and enjoy, in a certain way, more than becoming a pure servant of the Godhead.

Even in basic material relationships, real love goes beyond enjoying another person because they make you feel good; rather, the love manifests through your desire to spend time with them and serve them. Love is there and love spills over from you, but you also want to show the person that you care and love them. You feel good about doing selfless acts as an expression of your love. When the love is not so strong, you may have a good feeling about the other person’s association, but it simply stems from the feelings and stimulation you receive from that person. You do not really think about your partner or enjoy activities simply for their benefit. For some individuals, it may sound strange that we continuously talk about Krsna. We always talk about

surrender to God and lament over our lower standard, but we are trying to understand His desires so that we can connect in that way.

Question: I find that my mind always thinks the most ridiculous and even mean thoughts about other devotees. I cannot even seem to control it. What is a good way to check these thoughts that seem beyond my control?

Answer: Srila Bhaktisiddhanta said that one should take a shoe and beat the mind. Not literally, but the idea is that the mind is so crazy and wild that it needs to be tamed in such a way. Nevertheless, we must not identify with the mind. If we see ourselves as defined by the mind, we will latch onto and identify with all the garbage that it presents, and the senses will express themselves accordingly. We should view our mind as a separate entity that has accompanied us for a long time. First it finds ways to trick us and then it laughs at us. It is just like a clown. When you associate with a clown, he may first do something to get you off balance and then laugh at you, making you feel foolish. The mind also acts in this way. It sets up different situations, and after you fall prey to the tricks, it says, "Ah-ha, you fool! I got you again!" It entices you until you finally succumb to the trick. The danger is that as you give into the mind it becomes stronger and stronger. If *maya* would leave you alone after you satisfy her demands and pay your dues, it would be a different

story. However, *maya* does not work in this way—it is the complete opposite. The more you give into the bad habits and give into the gross or subtle *maya*, the more you become habituated and addicted. Then once you try to rid yourself of the addiction, *maya* says, “I know you! You normally give into me. What is the big deal now? Have you forgotten about this type of enjoyment?” *Maya* laughs at you. “You are trying to be strong but I know your weaknesses. I know what you really want to do, and I can wait until you are ready.” *Maya* sees the situation. It is like a drug dealer who approaches the addict. The addict says, “No, I am not into drugs anymore.” However, the seller wants to sell and once again involve the addict. The seller may say, “I know the problem. This is not enough for you but let me show you this drug. I will even give it to you at half price.” So, *maya* finds a way to entice you because she knows your weaknesses. She tries to captivate your existence. For this reason, it is dangerous. If you give into *maya*, you become more and more accustomed to the stimulation, which makes it harder and harder to stop. After a while, we can end up in an almost helpless position. Sometimes the addictions absorb a person to such an extent that they hate themselves and constantly wish they were not in such a position. However, they are so stuck that the struggle to get out is very difficult. When we habitually surrender to *maya*, it will seem almost impossible to get out of the situation. It is never actually impossible, but it will be very, very difficult.

Question: How do we know that our entrapment by the mind is not actually a sinful reaction from a past life or just our *karma*?

Answer: You do not even have to question it. It is definitely *karma* from the past and *karma* from the present. *Karma* is just the reaction of our past activities, speech, aspirations, etc. Our *karma* is constantly unfolding from activities in the past and even from our current behavior. We are either becoming more involved or less involved in the *karma* factor. We are trying to become *karma*-free by engaging in transcendental activities that are under the protection of the *parampara*. Then we will undergo fewer reactions that can stagnate us.

Question: How does a good reaction come? Since *karma* is not just negative reactions but also positive reactions, how does this work in balancing the negative *karma*? Is it already counterbalanced since we are not more fallen than our current status?

Answer: This relates to the previous example of an unemployed person who worked and saved money but currently does not receive an income. If we perform pious activities, we receive credits, and if we engage in negative activities, we lose the credits. We have a certain balance, and if we keep withdrawing without depositing, the credits will eventually diminish. As long as we remain in these material bodies, in material consciousness, we have to stay

in these material environments and associate with the *karma* in that way.

Question: When one commits an offense, the reaction is more offenses. If one engages in pious activities, will one gain more pious activities as a reaction?

Answer: The converse is also true. If you commit offenses, the reaction is like cancer. You commit one offense, which leads into other offenses until it becomes greater and greater. If you perform pious activities, you may become connected with more pious activities and eventually with transcendental activities. Many people who have some association with transcendental knowledge and lifestyle were very pious individuals. Their piety accumulated to such an extent that they received a book or heard from the devotees, and this allowed them to eventually come to devotional service. In one sense, Krsna consciousness is for everyone since it is everyone's natural birthright, but in another sense it is not quite that easy. We cannot go to the spiritual world unless the agents of the spiritual world invite us or bless us to return. There are even powerful material organizations or secret societies that require a special invitation from a current member. You cannot simply join, but if they feel you have something to offer or contribute to the spirit of their organization, they might offer you an invitation. For this reason, Lord Caitanya came to make this connection accessible.

He sends His great servants such as Rupa Gosvami, Jiva Gosvami, Madhavendra Puri, Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, Srila Prabhupada, etc. because they are residents from the spiritual world and they give the connection. For these reasons, Krsna consciousness is mind boggling to most people and is most powerful and dangerous. Very few societies in the world emphasize such a level of commitment between the disciple and *guru*. It is not a system in which one creates, interpolates or speculates; rather, it is a system in which the original reality is handed down and we must grab it. Krsna extends Himself by sending His agents; therefore, we need to fully and intensely connect with these agents. However, it is dangerous because if we do not handle this powerful connection properly, we can create all kinds of offenses or get abused. It requires intense faith and dedication. In relation to *karma*, if we do get abused or exploited, there is a lesson for us to learn since Krsna has allowed such an experience to take place in our life at a certain time. It is not that God is unfair or that He will allow some type of accident to happen in your life. If there are accidents, then the atheistic scientists are right and there is no infallible God. In that case, we are just involved in mythology and simply pray to God in order to feel good or to make us psychologically strong through some God conception. No, this is not the case. Krsna and His agents are giving a powerful prescription that works if we take it properly. However, we are so unfortunate because we

have the medicine but are not ready to take it properly and have now lost faith in the process. Srila Prabhupada explains in the *Bhagavad-gita* that we can become Kṛṣṇa conscious in a second or it may take many, many lifetimes. It is simply a matter of accepting the facts.

Question: In our religious support group that we have on Monday nights, we investigate the ten offenses and expose which of the offenses gives us the most problems. Generally, most of the devotees have trouble with the first and last offenses the most. Are these two offenses the most important ones for us to try and avoid in order to progress on this path of *bhakti*?

Answer: The first offense will automatically cause the others. If one commits the first offense, the tenth offense will automatically follow. It is just a matter of its level of intensity. The tenth offense is to maintain material attachments even after hearing so many instructions on the matter and to continue without fully accepting or appreciating. If you make the first offense, there is no way that you can appreciate the last one. There is no way that it can be strong for you. One may not speak about it openly but the other offenses will also be there. We have to increasingly appreciate that spiritual life is about spiritual community. We are not returning to the spiritual world to “bliss-out” in *mukti* or *nirvana* while having our own ideas and experiences of

Krsna's impersonal energies. Rather, we will engage in services in the spiritual environment that focus on the Supreme Personality of Godhead. However, it is not that one just waits for Krsna to appear while considering everything else to be useless and everyone else to be valueless. For instance, sometimes we disregard everyone except our own *guru* or we have no concern for anyone except our favorite *sannyasi*. We have no time to hear anyone else's classes and have no desire to serve any other devotees. This is complete nonsense because this mood has nothing to do with the atmosphere of the spiritual world, which is about intense appreciation. Every single position is appreciated with love and devotion regardless of the particular *rasa* or service exchange. We are practicing to return to the spiritual world and it begins and ends with the quality of our day-to-day association with *sadhus*. If we have strong association with *sadhus*, our appreciation for *guru* and Krsna will naturally increase. Just as offenses grade from one to another, the devotion grades from one level to another. One who does not have serious love, care and compassion for *sadhus* is not going anywhere in terms of their transcendental connection. One can perform many sacrifices, learn scriptures, chant Hare Krsna for years, give *laksmi* or honor *prasadam*, but these devotional activities will not matter if one does not include this most basic consideration. The person will continue developing, but much of their devotional creeper or service will be on hold. If the creeper is on hold

for too long without any growth, something has to break. Either they will start back sliding because of a lack of realization or a lack of sufficient rejuvenation, or they will finally understand the proper way to take the prescription and make the necessary changes in order to receive the full benefit of the medicine.

Question: It is said that there are no hard and fast rules for chanting the holy names. However, there are some recommendations for chanting the sixteen rounds of *japa*. For example, one should not chant while driving. Are there other exceptions or recommendations? Could you explain this further?

Answer: These are just practical considerations. If you are driving and chanting very powerfully, you may lose concentration on the secular situation that requires your attention. On the other hand, your chanting may simply become of such a poor quality. When it says that there are no hard and fast rules, it means that there is always benefit from the chanting, but some situations are more beneficial than others. It is not that we can only chant in the day or night, softly or loudly, in the temple or the house, etc. There are no hard and fast rules but certain situations facilitate quality chanting more than others.

Question: In relation to devotee relationships, it seems that we sometimes get stuck in ways of being or relating with each other. Year after year we even find ourselves repeating the same patterns. Some of

us are waking up to the fact that we have to change our relationships and ways of relating to each other. Could you make any comment on this?

Answer: If we do not realize the gravity of our illness, we will not take the prescription seriously enough and will not sufficiently treat the sickness or disease. We tend to minimize the influence of *Kali-yuga* and Western culture, which revolves around competitiveness, impersonalism and self-centeredness. There is tremendous superficiality about the God conception. As a result, when we enter the spiritual environment, we think that we are all right and do not work deeply enough to break away from the many terrible patterns that we bring with us. Until we can see the seriousness of our disease, we will not endeavor sufficiently to make the necessary changes. We tend to think that because we have the greatest philosophy and all the other people are “just materialists” or *karmis*, we are OK. We may be admitted to the most wonderful hospital, but we are still sick and have to take the prescribed medicine and treatment. If we have the most wonderful facilities but do not take advantage of them, we may as well check into a poor hospital or stay at home. We may go into a hospital and think, “This is a famous hospital with the best doctors. I have heart trouble but the best heart surgeons are here. I have brain damage but the best brain surgeons are here. I am all right. I am in the hospital and these are my doctors.” However, if we do not take the treatment or the medicine,

our situation will not improve. If we have a serious problem such as cancer, heart disease, etc. and have the facility to receive the treatment from competent specialists or from top experts, it does not necessarily mean that we are under this treatment and are taking it sufficiently. This also occurs in the universities. Some universities are very famous and highly endowed, but at the undergraduate level, they are not so good. You may go to the university with all of these famous teachers but they will never teach the undergraduate students. Even though you joined their class, lecturers and assistants teach all of the lessons. Although you attend a good school, your education may not exceed the education provided by a community college where the teachers are more personal and work very hard. Sometimes people think that just by being a part of a powerful institution they will naturally be more advanced, but this is not necessarily the case. It depends on how much one takes advantage of the situation. In the past, we tended to think that because the institution is wonderful, we are wonderful. If we think in this way, we will miss the chance to work out some serious issues and develop deeper appreciation of what is available within the institution. Devotional service is about *sadhu-sanga*, and the quality of *sadhu-sanga* determines how we experience our day-to-day environment and experience more love and understanding of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa.

Verse 3

Humility & Tolerance

*trnad api sunicena
taror iva sahisnuna
amanina manadena
kirtaniyah sada harih*

“One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige and should be ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state of mind, one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.”

This third *sloka* of the *Sri Siksastaka* focuses on the procedure and consciousness required for chanting, with special emphasis on humility and tolerance. Humility is a difficult concept to understand because it is somewhat foreign to our present existence and artificial senses. The current world

order is basically a “take” society in which the fundamental patterns of interaction revolve around notions of survival of the fittest and competition. The basic culture of a material society revolves around self-centeredness and individualism, which involves tremendous manipulation and exploitation. In this type of society, one group, one person, one tribe or one race constantly tries to capitalize on others. Material culture runs in this way primarily due to the limited nature of material resources. When resources decrease, people become disturbed and fearful about the acquisition and protection of their share of property. Many individuals who have accumulated material opulence live in self-made prisons. They lock themselves into big houses or mansions with burglar bars on all the windows and doors. To simply leave a room, they often have to unlock three or four different locks. Fear of robbers and thieves constantly plagues their lives. This may even be a justifiable fear due to the value of their possessions.

The *isavasya* principle or the God-centered conception directly opposes this type of consciousness. Individuals who follow this principle accept only a certain quota for their maintenance, recognize the source of their possessions, and give proper honor and respect to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. Humility becomes difficult to access when one lives in survival consciousness. As we depend less and less on mundane material society, we will live in better harmony with the natural. As we better

regulate the variables in our lives, we will have some control of our situation and develop more appreciation for the natural. In this way, humility can develop more easily.

In this day and time, numerous crises and conflicts exist as a direct result of a lack of humility. Essentially, the survival of an individual, organization or group depends on their ability to deal with conflicts and to quickly and efficiently resolve different problems. Spiritual life also involves conflict resolution, which manifests on different levels.

Destructive Conflict Resolution

More and more of human society resorts to a destructive level of conflict resolution that is extremely demonic. The demonic position is *asuram bhavam asritah* (*Bhagavad-gita* 7.15). The demons desire to sabotage and destroy any spiritual activity. Their goal is to bring devastation to theism. The first, grossest level of conflict resolution in a competitive society involves winning only through the destruction of another. In other words, one individual can only achieve success through the demise or failure of another. This means that, as one progresses and achieves certain goals, one must simultaneously think about methods to wipe out and destroy any competition. This position is especially demonic. The demons want to be the lords and controllers of all they survey and want to thoroughly eliminate all competition. Along with their endeavors to destroy the theists, the demons even fight among them-

selves. Instead of co-existing in a humble manner, people are thinking in aggressive and nefarious ways and reflecting on the means to eliminate the opposition. The demons always think in this manner, even to the point of trying to eliminate Krsna.

The second level of conflict resolution, which takes a small step beyond the demonic position, says that I win and you lose. The demonic view feels that I win and I have to finish you and destroy you in order to protect my own position. The second level focuses on personal success at the expense of another, but the competition does not necessarily need to be destroyed. Basically, somebody is going to win and somebody is going to lose. A person will not put forth any effort to stop the opposition but, at the same time, he or she will not make any effort to help because, after all, both parties cannot win.

Spiritual Conflict Resolution

The more humanistic, and ultimately spiritual, conception accepts that both parties can win. This conception develops from the belief that success, achievement and sufficient resources are available for everyone. Everything material exists and remains for a period of time but ultimately disappears. Spiritual realities are different. When we give a spiritual connection to another soul, we will not have less; rather, we will have more. We do not need to maintain gross mentalities that involve actively trying to destroy someone or trying to win at the demise of another. Such competitiveness increases when we

become too captured by modernity. Competition exists in the spiritual world also, but this competition focuses on enhancing the services and creating more chances to serve Krsna with variegation.

Manifesting Humility & Tolerance

In order to continue chanting the Lord's name and access the deeper experiences described in these *Sri Siksastaka* prayers, we must access humility with tolerance. However, this task will be difficult in environments that revolve around conflicts, false ego, aggressiveness, manipulation, control and exploitation of natural, human or financial resources. For this reason, Srila Prabhupada wanted to establish Krsna consciousness in such a way that we do not have to depend too deeply on the mundane nature of material society. Material society practically attacks spiritual practices and attacks the development of higher realizations and connections.

In order to understand the true nature of humility, we can first eliminate certain attributes that do not relate to humility. First of all, humility is not the absence of self-esteem. In new age terminology, humbleness or meekness usually indicates a lack of self-esteem and a need for one to access their own power and control. Actually, a humble individual is not lacking in any way. Humility also surpasses mere tolerance of another person or situation. Sometimes, when we tolerate, we simply characterize another person as nonsense and see ourselves above such

foolishness. We may view the other person's behavior as improper, ridiculous or obnoxious and tolerate in this negative mood. Instead of trying to help the person or change the situation, we simply label and characterize. We imagine ourselves to be righteous and humble; therefore, we tolerate the other person who we label as a deviant. This is not humility. Self-righteousness is often the opposite of humility. Seeing another person in this condescending mood is actually arrogance. Real humility does not categorize without offering help—it approaches a situation from different perspectives in order to analyze the problem deeper. Humility is also not blind faith. Our competitive world order often sees a humble individual as a weakling or blind follower who lacks the intelligence and creativity to make personal choices. Humility does not mean that one should be foolish, docile or easily led.

Obstacles to Developing Humility

We also need to examine the many obstacles that sabotage the development of genuine humility. The list of interferences includes false pride, false ego, fear, envy, lust, anger, illusion, greed and even insecurity. As we analyze this list, we can immediately understand the negative consequences of such traits. For instance, when someone suffers from false pride and feels excessively important, they will not be able to access deep humility. This sense of self-importance places the mind at the forefront, and this will lead one to accept the various concoctions

dictated by the mind and intelligence. How can we act humbly with the mind in control? False ego also results in a situation similar to pride. Fear blocks humility because it leads to survival consciousness. Someone who fears the environment, accepting it as precarious and dangerous, cannot be humble. Instead, their mood will become combative and aggressive. Envy impedes humility because it causes one to feel hostile towards another individual in the environment. We will simply feel disturbed by the qualities or possessions of another person. Enviousness, selfishness, self-centeredness, pride, false ego, doubt, envy, greed and illusion are a few of the attributes or personality traits that completely block the expression of humility. Unfortunately, people who have these traits constantly feel intense fear, pride or insecurity. Humility helps to ground us.

After acknowledging these misconceptions about humility along with the various obstacles, we can better understand that genuine humility is not a lack in substance or the result of weakness. Our present day environment causes us to think in this way due to the belief that successful individuals achieve greatness through their expertise in manipulation and exploitation. Society often views righteous or humble individuals as irrelevant or even as failures since they may not maintain a position of dominance. However, even the Judeo-Christian perspective accepts that the meek shall inherit the earth. All the various religious traditions of the world emphasize submissiveness, meekness and humility.

Humility has many positive sides and qualities. If we feel some insufficiency in our service, instead of resorting to low self-esteem, we can simply see others in a higher position than ourselves. Humility also gives us an eagerness to learn. When we are free of the egocentricity of thinking that we know everything, we can then become humble and ready to receive. Furthermore, we can relinquish our claim to proprietorship by recognizing that all of our qualities come from God and by learning to properly use them in His service. Humility allows a person to be secure. Our insecurities force us to react because of our lack of balance or strength. Any slight disturbance will cause more instability. For example, when you lack proper balance, the harsh words of another person will naturally disturb you. However, when you have sufficient stability, the same words will seem irrelevant and will not cause an overreaction or unnecessary disturbance. In Washington D.C., we have a martial arts institute. When one masters certain arts of defense, one does not need to respond to every situation because of a personal awareness of one's power. The person has the fearlessness to wait until the last minute to respond. When we are strong and fixed in our devotional service, we can naturally access humility because we will not feel any insecurity from the *maya* in the environment or from anyone else. Humility can also help us appreciate our connection to our origin. Although the living entity is insignificant, the soul is still part and parcel of the Supreme Personality

of Godhead. In a secular situation, a person may not have much money, but if their mother or father has wealth, they can feel some sense of well-being. Although they may not have much capital, their parents can make resources available, freeing them from any sense of insecurity.

Most importantly, humility involves a genuine loving heart and loving sentiments. From this discussion, we can see the great complexity of real humility.

Active Humility

This third verse of the *Sri Siksastaka* shows that humility is very active.

“One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind” and “should be ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.”

This type of mindset alone does not produce or maintain humility, which also depends on relationships and interactions. A genuinely humble person does not tolerate and repress while maintaining false ego and pride; the person eagerly desires to glorify and respect others. This mindset is not an artificial imposition. Humility is not just a matter of tolerating disturbances, although it manifests this quality. Rather, humility involves action such as

glorifying, serving, respecting and offering homage to others.

We already dismissed the idea that humility is a weakness or a type of dysfunction. Accessing humility can be intense due to our many interferences. As we examine the interferences that hinder our development of humility, we will better understand the causes of our misfortune and inability to access the potency of the holy name. The Lord has invested all of His transcendental potency in the holy name, but due to our misfortune, we have no attraction. *Aparadhas* and *namabhasa* also interfere. In order to receive all the available treasures and to continue chanting with realization and experiences, *kirtaniya sada harih*, humility must come first.

Examining Our Own Humility

As we look at our own lives during this exploration of humility, we need to first discover our own misconceptions. We can study our consciousness to determine if we have a mindset of offering respect to others. If our meditations revolve too much around our own achievements or lack of achievements, we have not accessed humility. Sometimes we create a God-playing syndrome by worrying about our own deficiencies. We worry about our sickness, our lack of intelligence, our lack of a good husband, wife or child, and so many other problems. Our excessive lamentation is the complete opposite of humility because we put our own lives in the center. If, after examining our own consciousness, we find a lack

of enthusiasm to offer respect to others or we offer it in a grudging mood, we can understand some of the reasons for our inability to chant with attachment. We will simply chant mechanically and fail to experience any higher realization or connection to the holy name. Without proper humility, the results simply will not manifest. Therefore, we must look at our own pride, ego, fears, illusions, doubts and self-centeredness in order to determine our own obstacles.

Another aspect of humility simply involves moving aside and allowing Krsna and *guru* to drive. The lives of the great *acaryas* exemplify this transcendental aspect of humility. Amazingly, their prayers and words seem to repeatedly denigrate themselves and they genuinely think in this way. As these *acaryas* approach Krsna's tremendous opulence, power, mercy and magnanimity, they literally feel unqualified and unworthy to receive the overwhelming experiences available to them. As the different ages pass from *Satya-yuga* towards *Kali-yuga*, everything decreases for the living entity such as intelligence, duration of life, body size and the degree of piety. The only attribute that increases is *ahankara* or false ego. As one moves farther and farther away from Krsna and His associates, the false ego concomitantly increases. All kinds of complexities arise for those who have little knowledge. It is actually very dangerous to associate with a spiritualist who has power but who lacks humility. The danger arises because real devotional strength and a genuine

spiritual connection cannot exist without humility. Spiritualism and great power without humility will result in exploitation, manipulation and abuse. At worst, the power will stem from demonic connections because demons are also powerful controllers. However, they utilize their control, potency and power for destruction and devastation. When you see great spiritual strength without humility, be careful. This consciousness indicates that the individuals view themselves as God's gift to the planet and fail to value others due to personal conceit. When we observe the mood of actual *vrajavasis*, the mood of the *gosvamis*, and the mood of genuine devotees, we will discover large amounts of love and respect for each other. This mood is not artificial or a type of mental gymnastics that requires rigorous work; rather, it is a natural result of genuine humility. On the other hand, the demigods have great power and lack humility, which naturally results in fear amongst them. The demigods often attack one another or attack other living entities that threaten their high posts in the material world. One may have a leadership position and even chant the holy name but excessive false pride, fear or illusion will result in this type of combativeness instead of appreciation. In this situation, we will only find manipulation and autocratic power play. These negative attributes prevent us from relishing the holy name.

Basically, we need to move out of the way and let *guru* and Krsna drive. We need to make ourselves available to accept and receive what is always acces-

sible, and humility readies us to receive. Krsna and His agents eagerly want to share and to give but, without sufficient humility, we bring in different patterns of obfuscation. The practice of humility can compare to the process of *bhakti* since these are not sentimental practices. *Bhakti* takes certain prerequisites such as knowledge and austerity in order to surrender. If we feel insecure or fearful or do not have knowledge, we cannot surrender. We must have knowledge in the sense of understanding the purpose of our engagements. Our devotional service will have greater potency if we act in the proper way with the proper knowledge or consciousness. On the other hand, if we only accidentally act properly, the action will not have the same potency as an action performed in knowledge. Surrender includes all such things with humility in the forefront. For this reason, New Age philosophy can be dangerous since it teaches that: "I am god," "you are god," "he is god" or "she is god." It teaches that we simply should follow our own truth and respect everyone else's truth. In this way, we can all be gods. But, real humility understands the presence of a Supreme Absolute Truth. Recognition of an Absolute Truth is not just dogma. There is an absolute loving Godhead who tries to make that love available, and we are interfering with this love. We must stop interfering and open ourselves up to receive. Humbleness gives us the ability to receive. If someone tries to give us a gift but we feel uncomfortable with the person, the environment or the packaging, we may not accept

the gift. Doubt and fear are very inimical to *bhakti*, but if we try to artificially rid ourselves of these stag-nations, they will simply turn into blind faith. Instead of blindly jumping in and out of different activities or processes, we should pursue an investigation and then intensely commit in order to receive.

Lower Than the Straw in the Street

“One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street.” This is quite a low position. “One should be more tolerant than a tree.” Modern psychology would probably view this type of person as dysfunctional, suffering in a state of neurosis or psychosis. This type of person would seem to lack self-esteem. The condition of seeing oneself as lower than the straw in the street might sound miserable. Straw is insignificant, blown around by the wind and driven over by cars. Even though we should feel ourselves insignificant, we should notice others and offer respects. We should not need respect, and we should even fear too much praise. For example, Madhavendra Puri would run away if someone excessively praised him. Although he was so dear to the Deity that the Deity spoke to him, he did not want to be known nor did he desire any praise, so he would simply leave the area. In this consciousness, one does not claim proprietorship, realizing that everything results from Kṛṣṇa’s blessings and mercy. Material consciousness cannot contaminate a person who deeply honors the Lord in this way and

returns everything to Him. Material consciousness is an environment for thieves and rogues who claim proprietorship. If we had something that belongs to another person and claim it as our own, we would be considered thieves. Krsna gives everything but the materialists deny His existence and claim everything as their own. Conversely, one may abandon this consciousness but still not attain genuine humility if one simply feels materially useless, worthless or suicidal. An alcoholic or a drug addict may feel worthless, viewing themselves as nothing and losing hope for the future, but real spiritual insignificance means recognizing the greatness of God. One will feel small and insignificant next to the greatness of God and the magnificence of the spiritual paradigm. This feeling of insignificance will cause us to feel distant from the spiritual realities, but will simultaneously increase our desire to experience these spiritual realities. If we think that we have already attained the higher platform, we will not work hard to acquire it. If we feel that it is not accessible, we will also not endeavor very seriously. Acknowledging our insignificance and our distance from spiritual realities allows us to appreciate the goal and move swiftly towards it. The Chinese conception of humility is the capacity to experience awe. This is an interesting concept. A proud individual will not have this awe or wonder because they will feel that nothing exists beyond their own activities, knowledge or perceptions. Nothing will excite such individuals unless it applies to their own experience or arena of control.

How can people understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead if they consider themselves to be so important? By accepting their own importance, they actually view themselves as God.

More Tolerant Than a Tree

The second part of this prayer focuses on tolerance. "One should be more tolerant than a tree." In the *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, *Antya-līlā* 20.22-26, it is stated:

"These are the symptoms of one who chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. Although he is very exalted, he thinks himself lower than the grass on the ground, and like a tree, he tolerates everything in two ways. When a tree is cut down, it does not protest, and even when drying up, it does not ask anyone for water. The tree delivers its fruits, flowers and whatever else it possesses to anyone and everyone. It tolerates scorching heat and torrents of rain, yet it still gives shelter to others. Although a Vaiṣṇava is the most exalted person, he is prideless and gives all respect to everyone, knowing everyone to be the resting place of Kṛṣṇa. If one chants the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa in this manner, he will certainly

*awaken his dormant love for Krsna's
lotus feet."*

This is an active position. Not only does the tree not refuse to give, it offers everything without any grudges or anxieties. Humility involves more than just refraining from certain acts. Humility requires positive actions in terms of one's eagerness to serve, help and give shelter to others, and to perform these services with great happiness. An actual devotee is *param-duhkha-duhkhi krpam buddhi*, they feel the pain and suffering of others and also their happiness. If someone suffers, they have the ability to empathize because they genuinely care. They do not see themselves as separate but feel connected due to their understanding of the ultimate source, God. They have deep sensitivity to the parts and parcels of the Lord who manifest in various ways. Do we feel happy or excited to see another devotee excelling in their spiritual life when we have not excelled? Do we feel excited to see someone nicely performing his or her service, having good fortune, or experiencing a type of boon? Or do we believe that we deserve these benefits instead? We might feel we are more qualified because we have been devotees longer, work harder, could perform the service better or could more efficiently use the gift. How often do these thoughts come into our minds instead of feelings of excitement over the success of another? We can look at this type of consciousness in the most simplistic terms. For example, maybe

only a small amount of *maha* or *prasadam* remains from the last meal. Will we consider the other people in the hallway and serve them first? The genuinely humble person will naturally think this way all the time or at least, most of the time. Instead, we may see this small amount of *prasadam* or our favorite preparation and endeavor to get our share before anyone else comes. Our consciousness is about the aggregate of all our small actions. We do not have to be masochists or sadists, suffering and putting ourselves in miserable situations just to feel like martyrs or victims. But, when we have a chance to share, do we think about the other person's welfare as much as or more than our own? If these positive reflections are not a dominant part of our consciousness, these obstacles will interfere with our ability to chant or to access deeper experiences from the actual chanting. This consciousness is natural and fully exhibited by the residents of Vrndavana. They always think in this mood of being all for Krsna and His servants. The false ego does not exist in them.

Offering All Respect to Others

Several of Srila Prabhupada's letters from the *Siksamrta* discuss humility. In his letter dated November 28, 1967, to Mother Nandarani, Prabhupada says:

"The mistake is that in being addressed as boss or prabhu, one thinks himself as exactly prabhu

or the boss. One should not forget himself as a humble servant even though one is addressed as prabhu."

In our normal exchanges, we call each other *prabhu* or master, emphasizing our position as servants. But those who think of themselves as *prabhu*, as *sannyasi*, or as *guru* are in a fallen state, because they view themselves as proprietor and master. Although someone may call us *prabhu*, in our own minds we should see ourselves as a servant. Otherwise there is stagnation. A *guru* should not think, "I am *guru* and this is my disciple who should serve me and take my word as the absolute." A *guru* should think, "By the mercy of my *guru*, I get Krsna." And the disciple should also think, "By the mercy of my *guru*, I get Krsna." All these types of mindsets determine our level of pride, false ego, imbalance, fear or illusion, which checks humility. Yes, we do call each other *prabhu* but we should not accept that for ourselves. Srila Prabhupada again writes in a letter to Brahmananda on November 15, 1967:

"The idea is that personally, one should be very meek and humble even in the presence of greatest provocation, but a slight insult to Krsna or His representative should at once be taken seriously and appropriate measures should be taken."

Again, humility does not mean avoidance or denial. In some situations, humility even means to act aggressively in the sense of being truthful and concerned about the ultimate well-being of others. A person may avoid addressing a certain issue, considering this to be humility, but by remaining quiet, he or she actually does a disservice to another or to the environment by reinforcing some nonsense. In these situations, humbleness means to not care for the likes and dislikes of another, to not endeavor to simply please a personality and to not endeavor for the sentimental approval of another. We should really care about their higher needs. If you see me every week smoking cigarettes or marijuana, but you feign humility by pretending not to see or notice the situation, you are not really humble. We might think that by bringing up an issue, the other person will become our enemy. We may think, "He is a *sannyasi* and I don't want to tell anyone that he is smoking marijuana. Instead, I am just going to follow the philosophy and be humble." This is not actual humility. Humility means that we eagerly serve others by helping them understand their improper actions. It means speaking up in order to bring the other person to a higher level.

The next letter is to Jaya Govinda on February 8, 1968 from Srila Prabhupada.

"A devotee should always remain humble and meek, especially to the authorities and devotees. Lord

Caitanya's philosophy is not to become God, but to become servant, servant, servant of God."

Setting the Example

On March 3, 1968, Prabhupada wrote to Hamsaduta and Himavati:

"One should never feel, 'Oh, I have seen Krsna, and so I am reached perfection.' This is not Krsna consciousness."

The Nectar of Devotion explains that when one advances from the platform of *sadhana-bhakti* to *bhava* and *prema*, one should continue to act in the spirit of trying to become perfect. Why? One must avoid *sahajiyaism*. Furthermore, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura explains that one should not reveal their *bhajana*. What does this mean? When someone reaches the level of penetrating the three modes of material nature, in order to avoid cheating mentalities, to avoid confusing neophytes and to avoid minimization of healthy rules and regulations, one should continue following the rules and regulations in order to prevent disturbances in the environment.

It is not that Srila Prabhupada had to chant Hare Krsna. He was always thinking of Krsna. It is not that he had to read books, but he read his own books as well as many other *acaryas'* books. It is not that

those activities were necessary. It is not that in the spiritual world everyone has to follow structured rules and regulations. Acting in the right way is simply natural and spontaneous. Krsna consciousness is more than just rules and regulations or do's and don'ts. In our unnatural state, we need many rules to help us develop the proper balance in order to become natural and spontaneous. However, if such people who have fully attained this level in their bodies act accordingly, they will simply cause disturbances. To the average person, a pure devotee would seem like a madman due to their constant absorption in great expressions of Krsna's love; therefore, they tone themselves down. However, if we investigate Srila Prabhupada's life, we will find different cases where he did not always fully hide the ecstasy.

We often see that the mystic, the psychic or the pseudo-religionist is very eager to talk about their experiences. Different New Age groups often talk extensively about their experiences during meditation, channeling, dreaming or during other situations. Everyone wants to show that their experience is greater and that they are more divine. They eagerly boast even when they have nothing. Unfortunately, the environment often focuses on the discussion of these experiences, which can result in pretense and artificiality. Some people may even pretend to have had similar experiences in order to share and discuss. At certain levels, experiences can no longer be discussed but simply must be experienced. In

these letters, Srila Prabhupada emphasizes that one should never feel that they own Krsna, or have seen Krsna or have reached perfection.

Haridasa Thakura thought, "If I do not finish all of my rounds, I will fall into *maya*." As a direct resident from the spiritual world, he was seeing Krsna. The *gosvamis* were *manjaris* and always cried for Radha and Krsna even though they were in full possession of Them. Instead of feeling themselves to be worthy proprietors, they were always in a state of unfolding.

Srila Prabhupada writes to Krsna dasa on June 1, 1968:

"This humbleness is the sign of progress in Krsna consciousness. A Krsna conscious person thinks always about himself as the lowest creature in the world, and the more one thinks like that he becomes elevated more and more."

To Himavati on June 14, Prabhupada says, "But because somebody is calling you *prabhu*, one should not become a *prabhu* and treat others as servants." Sometimes we see a devotee who develops this spirit and thinks, "I am a *brahmana* and have to go study. Ask *Bhakta* Jim to sweep the floor. I'm beyond that because I'm a *brahmana*!" Or we get into a similar consciousness, thinking, "Oh, I have arrived. You are asking me? Can't you see my

cloth? I am a *sannyasi*." Actually, one should have the opposite mindset, acting as the servant and eager to serve.

Srila Prabhupada writes to Malati:

"I thank you very much for your nice letter of October 29, 1968, and I have noted your nice sentiments. Yes, we should always think ourself as the most fallen, the most ignorant, and it is simply by the mercy of Lord Caitanya that we have even the opportunity to serve Krsna."

These thoughts do not indicate foolishness. If we genuinely feel unworthy, we will diligently work on ourselves to become worthy. These feelings of unworthiness will help us work hard to appreciate, value and cherish that which is available. If we believe that we deserve something and even deserved it earlier, the same appreciation will not set in. If we feel that we obtained certain results due to our own endeavor and believe that we should have received even more, we have a very dangerous mindset. If we use our current facilities properly and have sufficient appreciation, Krsna will give more.

If one receives more facility for executing spiritual activities in a spiritual environment but fails to simultaneously develop more humility, this extra facility will simply electrocute the person. When a person receives more opulence, he or she cannot

remain in the same consciousness. This pertains directly to our present situation in our movement and in our own lives, because as we receive more responsibility, more manpower or more money, we must constantly increase our humility. Without humility, the false ego will increase, encouraging one to use, manipulate and deal with the facility in a self-centered spirit. The ego will cause the person to feel like the lord of all they survey and the cause of all their extra facilities. Often people fall due to this type of mentality. Sometimes a fall does not directly result from the object of sense gratification, which externally causes the fall; rather, it results from this disease of pride and false ego. Lack of humility may allow a situation to come upon a person, and they will then not have the resistance to counteract the attack. We can sometimes see these situations manifest when a devotee falls due to illicit sex, money or another type of sense gratification. In Arjuna's case, once Krsna left the planet, a situation that normally would have never bothered him, defeated him. When our resistance gets weak, a fall can occur. Lack of humility weakens our defenses. For this reason, a person with power, but without humility, is like a time bomb. It is only a matter of time before there is a serious fall. It will be gradual at first since they will justify all types of behavior. Although they will continue to use their environment, manpower and facilities in so many wonderful ways, their personal spiritual life will be checked at some point, resulting in a fall. The gifts that Krsna

gives are powerful, comparable to electricity. Electricity is very powerful; therefore, we have to use the cord properly by covering it with insulation so that it will not shock or electrocute us. A fall is Krsna's way to expose an improper connection so that one can rectify the situation or consciousness.

Unfortunately, when a person falls due to a lack of humility, it will be more difficult to pick themselves up again because the same problem now compounds the situation. In other words, when you fall or have a difficulty, it takes humility to pick yourself up again. Although devotees forgive, we unfortunately do not forget so easily. So, when a person falls and everyone knows that the person fell, he or she will have difficulty in picking themselves up, because in most cases, lack of humility allowed certain problems to build and cause the fall. However, if we serve Krsna with sufficient humility, then Krsna, through the mercy of Lord Nityananda, will give protection. In *Kali-yuga*, it is practically impossible to become very strong in the process. Nevertheless, *maya* is a servant of Krsna, and as we surrender to the *parampara* system, we will have protection just as one under an umbrella receives protection from the rain. When Indra attacked the residents of Vrndavana with torrents of rain, Krsna lifted Govardhana Hill and gave protection to those under His shelter. Just because we have involved ourselves in such a high level spiritual process does not mean that we will not be attacked. The demons will try to attack even more. In war, you go for the generals, trying to

sabotage and destroy as much as possible. Therefore, anything powerful in the Hare Krsna movement will draw some of the most powerful demonic attacks. Demons know where to find spirituality, but if we are under shelter, the attacks will not affect us. Conversely, if we have not placed ourselves under the proper shelter, the demons feel very happy. They think, "Oh, you try to declare war against us without any weapons, but we will finish you off right away." When we involve ourselves in the actual culture of devotion with too much pride or lack of humility, it means that we have put on our uniforms for the adversary to see, but we have no weapons. Will the enemy say, "Go back and get your weapons. Go back and fortify yourself and then come and fight." No. The adversary will see us as an easy target and will quickly finish us off. If we want to battle with *maya* without humility, she will attack very heavily.

Lord Caitanya has explained:

"One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and should be ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly."

All of these obstacles previously discussed interfere with the chanting. And, if we fail to offer respect to others, the chanting will not have a sufficient effect and we will not obtain the goal.

Questions & Answers

Question: I often have problems with tolerance. I notice that I will be tolerant, but in the mood of thinking myself to be better than the other person. Then I will try to tolerate nonsense over and over, but tolerance finally becomes too much and I become angry. In this case, I am trying to be humble and the other person can see this, but still they constantly try to attack me. Should I keep this position? How can I deal with this situation?

Answer: Humility is not foolishness or the reinforcement of nonsense. It does not help to function in a way that reinforces another person's offenses. On the other hand, we need to examine ourselves. Are we just repressing and tolerating but really thinking that the other person is wrong? Or do we consider that we ourselves could be wrong? Do we really relate properly to *sadhu*, *sastra* and *guru*? Or have we concocted our own ideas of right and wrong? Do we function according to our own prestige or position? If someone disagrees with our self-image and does not accept our guidance or instruction, but we feel that they must accept since we have the answers, we really need to look closer at the dynamics of our interactions. Then, we simply do our best and we are held responsible.

Question: If they act in this way, should we be honest and confront the situation to prevent it from continuing?

Answer: The best way to help is through one's own good example. Then, we can offer some advice or assistance but not in a condescending way. We offer our help as a service, not feeling categorically sure that we understand the situation, and not attached to the results. We are servants of each other and responsible for each other, so we should not ignore a problem. We have a duty to perform, but at the same time, we should not look for faults or weakness and simply criticize. If we engage in faultfinding, another person's problems may help us to feel superior since we do not have the same problem. Sometimes devotees eagerly examine the problems of another because they want to feel superior or feel that their own problem is not so serious. For example, I may smoke marijuana once a week, but justify the action because other people smoke every single day.

Question: You described earlier that low self-esteem is not wanted. Is there a type of lose-win philosophy that says, "It is too much trouble to deal with this strong person so I will just let them lord over me?" I categorized this as humility, but in fact, it seems to be based on low self-esteem. I may take the so-called humble position but it never satisfies me.

Answer: This is a kind of cowardice. Not only will

you remain unsatisfied, but you will also reinforce the person's position of nonsense and dominance. In this sense, your behavior will actually add to the problem. One can be humble in this situation by not becoming angry or disturbed, but not by accommodating something improper. We cannot force an issue, but just bring it up according to your understanding and the person will act with their free will. In this way, you are neither reinforcing their behavior nor experiencing anxiety and distress from the situation. Encountering an improper situation and internalizing it will simply cause you frustration, which can result in all sorts of sicknesses. When you accommodate improper things, it eats away at your health in different ways.

Question: We hear in the philosophy that we should not associate with people who are nonsense, but it seems that these are the very people who need our association.

Answer: Although we may be around them, the idea is to give our association rather than accept improper things from them. If we preach to a gambler, butcher or anyone engaged in sinful activity, we should try to help, share and give without picking up their patterns. We are more or less giving our association without taking theirs. Preaching always involves some risk and some contamination; therefore, we should move into such situations with caution, not letting our guard down or getting too comfortable. If

we become too relaxed and accept the environment, we will become like the environment. Although we have to work in all types of environments, a devotee must feel foreign in any place bereft of the glorification of the Lord. More and more devotees work outside and have to associate with all kinds of *karmis*. Even on *sankirtana* we sometimes have to go to the most sinful places. If one identifies with the environment, it gets dangerous. The association must be in the spirit of “transcendental espionage” as agents for Krsna and we must act in this way. We must remind ourselves of our connection, commitments and responsibilities. We are working on behalf of *guru* and Krsna and should have the consciousness that they are always watching us. Would they be happy with my involvement in this behavior? Would they appreciate my current activity? We can evaluate association in this sense.

Question: I sometimes like to involve myself in the healing arts field and New Age arena. I often think of the many merging psychologies and philosophies that appear interesting and attractive, and I like to see them in relationship to Krsna consciousness. One of them involves the idea of self-acceptance. This is an important aspect of psychology and New Age thinking. In terms of Krsna consciousness, I think that self-acceptance means letting Krsna be Krsna and letting us accept ourselves as we are—servants of God.

Answer: One of the key factors is knowing the actual identity of the self. Modern day psychology does not have absolutes or the understanding of goals. The basis of the therapy focuses on helping the person become comfortable with themselves as they are. They do not view many activities as improper, so they will treat you by helping you to feel comfortable with your deviations. The therapist helps you to accept your situation. This is dangerous for us, because instead of focusing on pleasing God, we will focus on that which helps us feel comfortable with ourselves. Consequentially, we will look for peace instead of realization, or individual and collective pleasures instead of service. In this way, they teach people to be non-judgmental and to honor all situations so that everyone can function together nicely. Although this is not in any way transcendental, it is still better than the mode of ignorance. People simply want to become complacent by reducing their anxieties in relation to their problems. There is a difference between crisis management and crisis resolution. Without understanding real spiritual goals, people will remain in the prison and try to suffer peacefully. A person in prison suffers from confinement, but instead of getting free from the pain, the idea is to continue suffering peacefully with less distraction. If we have a toothache, we can use painkillers again and again to dull the pain, or we can solve the problem permanently by having the tooth filled or extracted, even though that may involve serious pain and inconvenience for several days.

In devotional service, we do not simply want to create cosmetic arrangements for temporary comfort. We want to deeply look at our issues, gross as well as subtle, and make necessary transitions. It is difficult because our environments are often inimical to such deep introspection. This type of investigation may even disturb other people. Many spiritualists or spiritually inclined individuals may think or say, "You don't have to get that involved." Sometimes our own friends and relatives will ask, "Are you still in the Hare Krsna movement? Haven't you had enough of that?" It becomes difficult when someone deeply involves themselves in a process but the environment is constantly challenging them. Most people want to use God in order to be happy. Even some theists approach Krsna with wants and needs, hoping that the Lord will make arrangements for them. They may want the heavenly connection, more enjoyment or less interference with their sense gratification rather than genuine spiritual life. They think, "Now that I have turned to God, I will get relief from those things interfering with my enjoyment. Therefore I will make this prayer." Being transcendental means passing far beyond this mentality and accessing a real sense of humility. It is difficult in environments that focus on competition and self-centeredness and deal with limited resources. From the spiritual perspective, unlimited resources exist, along with love and knowledge, but we have to remove the barriers and interferences. We can access humility simply by removing the blocks, and

this will open us to receive. Krsna wants to give, but if our hands remain tied by false ego, pride, lust or fear, we cannot accept. Once we get rid of these *anarthas*, we will be able to receive. Therefore, true humility puts us in a position to be the greatest receivers of Krsna's and *guru's* mercy in unlimited ways.

Verse 4

Wanting Only Devotional Service

*na dhanam na janam na sundarim
kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye
mama janmani janmanisvare
bhavatad bhaktir ahaituki tvayi*

*“Oh almighty Lord, I have no desire
to accumulate wealth, nor do I desire
beautiful women, nor do I want any
number of followers. I only want Your
causeless devotional service, birth
after birth.”*

First we will examine the proposition of desire. When people hear that we avoid gambling, intoxication, illicit sex and meat eating, they often wonder, “Then, what do you do? What is left?” Since people pursue these activities for fun and stimulation, even as the goal of life itself, no fulfillment seems possible beyond them. If they can increase their involvement in these areas, life is wonderful, but if they cannot, life is miserable due to a lack of sensual stimulation. For instance, the university is supposedly an

atmosphere of intellectual investigation and development, but in most cases, the environment simply increases one's sense gratification. For many people, the height of their sense gratification occurs during this period of their lives. College students are not exactly children, but they are normally not yet adults burdened by numerous responsibilities such as paying bills and maintaining a family. People often involve themselves in drugs and promiscuity more during this period than during any other period of their lives.

As devotees of this Hare Krsna movement, we do not oppose desires, because only a dead man has absolutely no desires. Desires always exist, but the significant factor is the direction in which these desires focus. The Buddhists strive to suppress or eliminate desire. In some Buddhist *asramas*, they meditate all day, without movement, in order to ultimately free themselves of all desires and stimulation. Actually, complete desirelessness is impossible. If we place a person in a completely white room with little stimulation for the mind and intelligence, the individual will eventually begin to hallucinate. Activity and expression are natural parts of the soul. If the mind is simply neglected in this way and the senses are cut off from activity, they will create their own activity to reflect on. We do not just tell people to stop their activities with no alternatives. We do not see ultimate satisfaction in merely eliminating activity. People think that spiritual life is the opposite of material life, meaning that if material life

is full of variety, heterogeneity, misery and suffering, spiritual life must mean the negation of this variety. However, spiritual life is not the opposite of anything. The spiritual does not exist simply as the opposite or the converse of the so-called material reality. The spiritual is the actual reality and material life is the perverted reflection.

Desires Separate From Krsna

This fourth *sloka* discusses *anyabhilasa* or desires separate from Krsna, which lead one to imprisonment in the coverings of illusion. For instance, even when the altar doors close and the partition separates us from the altar, the activity still continues behind the doors. Improper desires create a covering that obstructs proper contact with the higher. They do not eliminate or stop the connection but they cause obfuscation. When we relinquish motivations, desires and aspirations outside of devotional service and simply try to please Krsna, the curtain or divider will open to a degree proportionate to our freedom from unwanted desires. We want to come to the level of unmotivated, uninterrupted devotion. At this point, we will no longer be under the subjugation of the three modes of material nature. We will no longer be subjected to our likes and dislikes, to the bodily conception of life, *aham mameti*, or to the mentality of lording over material nature.

"I have no desire to accumulate

wealth, nor do I desire beautiful women (or handsome men), nor do I want any number of followers. I only want Your causeless devotional service, birth after birth."

This verse would sound very strange to a so-called "normal" or secular person. Somebody who is not pursuing sex for gratification? Somebody who does not want people to cheer them on? The so-called normal person would see this individual as dysfunctional and most unfortunate, with no sense of achievement or purpose in life. An individual who does not pursue these "natural" goals would seem existential. In one sense this is true, because one who does not pursue the goals of modern civilization may be categorized as mentally disturbed or even crazy. In one sense, everyone is crazy, either materially or spiritually, but it just depends on the type of craziness. The materialists are crazy about temporary stimulation, gratification and enjoyment. The eyes want to enjoy and experience various objects, the nose wants to experience nice aromas and the tongue desires to taste nice, palatable foods. The belly always hankers for satisfaction and the genitals always desire contact. Our senses are constantly pushing us. They constantly and viciously push us and never reach satisfaction.

Crazed Pursuit of Sense Gratification

The conditioned living entity is in a crazed state,

trying to find new kinds of sense gratification and constantly making arrangements for the senses. This is craziness. The living entity is pushed and forced to act wildly, irrationally and sporadically. On the other hand, spiritual absorption also results in craziness. This lack of desire for material things seems abnormal, but this type of craziness is madness for Kṛṣṇa's love, madness to hear about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and madness to gaze upon Kṛṣṇa's various forms. Do you think the *suddha-bhakta*, the unalloyed devotee, is not mad? These devotees are completely mad, entirely addicted to Kṛṣṇa, and intensely desire to hear about Kṛṣṇa. Their only solace comes from their connection with Kṛṣṇa. Everything else is void of any real satisfaction.

We have the free will to choose our type of craziness. We can be crazy for sense gratification, forced by lust and greed to act strangely and be captured by the senses and sense objects, or we can be addicted to the *bhakti* or the *prema*. If we pursue the lower realms or the separated energies of Kṛṣṇa, there are consequences. Pleasure based on sense gratification only gives immediate gratification and later brings negative consequences. For this reason, we say that no pleasure exists in the material world. Of course, sensual stimulation is available and sense gratification certainly gives stimulation, but it is only flickering. If every seemingly pleasant sensation immediately results in punishment and chastisement, we cannot consider the sensation to be pleasurable. Engaging in the various types of sense

gratification is like pressing a button that brings a kind of suffering. Therefore, we cannot call the sense gratification pleasurable. Every type of sin corresponds to a specific type of chastisement. It is unfortunate when a living entity continues to indulge in sin and gets repeatedly kicked. Often they think, "I got kicked because I did not make the right connection. I don't have the right profession and therefore I am suffering. I should change professions. I don't have the right body. I should be in a woman's body instead of a man's body or a man's body instead of a woman's body. I just don't live in the right part of the world. I made a mistake. She is just not the right woman. I knew I shouldn't have married her. The astrologer told me so and Grandma told me also." Then the living entity tries another type of connection. After trying so many different relationships, someone may start to think, "Well, maybe I'm pursuing the wrong gender because I cannot find satisfaction with the opposite sex. There is too much lack of understanding and lack of similarities." Then, people pursue the same sex, and this also eventually disturbs them so they again look for another connection. In different parts of the world, bestiality or sex with animals is on the rise. Incest is also increasing. People know that pleasure exists somewhere, but feel they just have not found it yet and they are starving for it. Due to this starvation, they try different ways to experience some happiness. Many people who work five or six days a week simply wait for the weekends to arrive. After the weekend

passes, they return to work on Monday completely depressed, because they spent their money but somehow did not experience the anticipated pleasure. Sometimes, the college students cannot even wait for the weekend but party throughout the entire week. Then, when final exams arrive, they have to cram and experience frustration. Proper happiness cannot exist outside of a connection with the *atma* or the soul.

Redirecting Our Desires

The process of eliminating unfavorable desires emphasizes not wanting to pursue anything separate from Kṛṣṇa. Our current environment challenges us because it constantly instructs us about our needs and wants. The environment incessantly stimulates us to accept unnecessary items as primary needs or to accept unhealthy and devastating sense gratification as beneficial. It will perpetually endeavor to agitate the senses until we try to calm the senses by allowing them to enjoy the sense objects. Desirelessness becomes very difficult when these sinful desires saturate the consciousness. Our conditioning may cause even more difficulty if the intelligence considers the fulfillment of these desires to be the ultimate goal of life.

It becomes very challenging—but not impossible. If we continue associating with stimuli that condition us to previous responses, we will simply increase our difficulty. We all notice that once we engage in devotional service in a serious way, we

cannot visit the same places in the same way. We cannot associate with the same people. If we feel comfortable with those who envy the Lord, we can understand that we have not significantly changed ourselves. If a devotee feels too comfortable with people who are full of material desires, it means that the devotee also possesses too many of the same desires or at least the seeds of such desires. As we increasingly relinquish such desires, we will want to associate with environments that stimulate our level of consciousness. We will want to hear about the Lord, visit sacred places of pilgrimage and remain in environments based on serving Kṛṣṇa rather than serving the senses.

Desires that Distract Us

Desires that interfere with our ability to relish the holy name and to experience Kṛṣṇa's unlimited compassion and love fall into four categories.

Liberation

The first is *mokṣa* or liberation. What is wrong with the desire for liberation? What is wrong with desiring liberation from sin? The problem is that this desire is still based on selfishness rather than on selfless service. It indicates a desire to be free of disturbances, complications, miseries and difficulties. But what exists after these problems subside? What are the positive, eternal activities?

Lust

The next category is *kama*, or lust. What is wrong

with lusting after another person? In this case, one no longer thinks only about the self, because the reflection now focuses on someone else. However, selfishness still permeates the consciousness since one thinks of the ways to enjoy the other person or connection. So what is wrong with mutual lust, where you lust after someone and someone lusts after you? Again we see the problem of selfish interest that removes Kṛṣṇa from the center. We accept lust as temporary and unsatisfying, yet some individuals may argue against this point. They may claim that an intelligent person would involve themselves in many areas of enjoyment in order to enjoy everlasting pleasure. They feel that one partner or one type of sensual reaction is not sufficient. Therefore, if one type of sense gratification becomes dull or dry, one simply needs to change the involvement. Unfortunately, this type of mentality strongly degrades the consciousness.

Economic Development

The third category is *artha* or desires for economic development. What is wrong with economic development? When the materialists see the devotees, they may exclaim, "You people always want money! You build so many temples, travel all over the world and buy many things!" Yes, we use money, but consciousness makes the difference. The materialists use money simply for their selfish gratification, but the devotees use the same money for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Religiosity

The final category is *dharma* or religiosity. What is wrong with religion? People may say, “You people oppose religion? This really sounds like a cult to me now!” Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* 18.66:

*sarva-dharman parityajya
mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo
mokṣayisyami ma sucah*

*“Abandon all varieties of religion
and just surrender unto Me. I shall
deliver you from all sinful reactions.
Do not fear.”*

This may sound strange to a fruitive worker who only imagines calling on God in a time of need. Some people understand God to be merely on the shelf, in the shrine, in the temple, in the church, mosque or *mandira*. In this way, people call on God for their needs, and after the needs have been fulfilled, they engage in their regular activities until the wants arise again. Many of their prayers, meditations and reflections are based on literally giving orders to the Lord. Consequently, when a particular desire is not fulfilled, they turn into atheists.

The Seed of Sinful Desires

Our last topic of this *sloka* will focus on the seed of sinful desires because sometimes we stop the

sinful activity but the seed for sinful activities still remains. Although we may cut off the top of the weed, if we leave the root in the ground it will grow again. What should we do? We first struggle to stop the sinful act but later find that this endeavor alone does not suffice. Maybe it seems that Krsna demands too much or that spiritual life is just too difficult. For example, the addict first stops the sinful activity, but due to previous conditioning and past tendencies, it may take a while before he or she can fully eradicate the sinful desires. Without sufficient strong faith, we may stop the sinful activity but will not deeply or confidently want to fully separate ourselves from the sin. In other words, we may externally stop but we continue thinking about and reflecting on past engagements. As another example, reflect on your transition to vegetarianism. In the beginning, you may have retained so much desire for smelling and eating dead bodies. Now, just the thought, sight or smell of dead flesh repulses you. In this case, we stopped the action with realization and understanding which has also severed the seed of the desire. Since we have fully accepted the action as unhealthy, we have few desires in relation to this past activity. However, if we stop the act without firm conviction, then we merely repress the desire or put it on hold while the seed remains and the mind continues to associate with those sinful thoughts. This position can be very precarious, because at some point the mental reflections will lead to the physical actions that can again dominate. This task

of stopping the gross and then checking the subtle should not seem to be an impossible task. As long as we stop the gross sinful activity and then change our desires, gradually the weed will choke and suffocate from lack of nourishment. However, if we continue providing nourishment, the seed will continue to cause us trouble.

Remaining Equipoised

Regarding improper desires, *Bhagavad-gita* 2.70 says:

*apuryamanam acala-pratistham
samudram apah pravisanti yadvat
tadvat kama yam pravisanti sarve
sa santim apnoti na kama-kami*

“A person who is not disturbed by the incessant flow of desires—that enter like rivers into the ocean, which is ever being filled but is always still—can alone achieve peace, and not the man who strives to satisfy such desires.”

Srila Prabhupada writes in his purport:

“Although the vast ocean is filled with water, it is always, especially during the rainy season, being filled with much more water. But the ocean remains the same—steady; it is not agitated.”

If we excessively tune in to the patterns of material society, these material desires will naturally overload us, making it difficult not to act on them. They will demand so much. The devotee, however, is not disturbed by such desires. The next verse, *Bhagavad-gita* 2.71, says:

*vihaya kaman yah sarvan
pumams carati nihsprhah
nirmamo nirahankarah
sa santim adhigacchati*

"A person who has given up all desires for sense gratification, who lives free from desires, who has given up all sense of proprietorship and is devoid of false ego—he alone can attain real peace."

The presence of false ego, especially the presence of a strong false ego, will automatically draw numerous material desires because the ego will demand unlimited attention and gratification that will bring many unhealthy desires. One last verse to reflect upon from *Bhagavad-gita* 6.24:

*sa niscayena yuktavyo
yogo 'nirvinna-cetasa
sankalpa-prabhavan kamams
tyaktva sarvan asesatah*

*manasaivendriya-gramam
viniyamya samantatah*

“One should engage oneself in the practice of yoga with determination and faith and not be deviated from the path. One should abandon, without expectation, all material desires born of mental speculation and thus control all the senses on all sides by the mind.”

When the mind is not controlled and the senses are not regulated, it will be difficult to become free of unhealthy desires. When the mind is absorbed in transcendental knowledge and the senses are subdued or regulated, it will become easier to access higher desires.

Questions & Answers

Question: I do not quite understand this discussion of selfishness. It seems to me that Krsna consciousness is the highest selfishness because we are after the highest thing.

Answer: When we examine semantics and consider the real identity of the self, Krsna consciousness is the real activity of the self. This process is not distinct from the ordinary self or connection of the self. For example, the hand is a natural part of the body and the hand, the arm, the stomach and the

mouth all go together. If the parts are in harmony, the hand takes the food to the mouth, the mouth chews and the stomach digests to nourish the whole body. However, if the hand decides to eat without feeding the mouth or stomach, the body will not receive any nourishment. We understand from *Bhagavad-gita* 15.7:

*mamaivamso jiva-loke
jiva-bhutih sanatanah
manah-sasthanindriyani
prakṛti-sthāni karsati*

“The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind.”

We are all eternally and originally parts and parcels of Kṛṣṇa but are now suffering in various ways due to our desires separate from Kṛṣṇa. If an object separates from its source, it either malfunctions or becomes totally dysfunctional. We are undergoing a similar predicament due to our separation from Kṛṣṇa. Once the connection is proper, the entire system will benefit. In one sense, you are right because this prayer says that we do not want or need the temporary. Actually, it really says that

we do not want anything mediocre, temporary or secondary, but rather that we aspire for the highest. We can even describe Krsna consciousness as the highest sense gratification because it gives the real satisfaction of the senses. We are literally preparing ourselves and arranging for the highest sense gratification, which never ends. Although we need to pay some small dues now, our present endeavor to become fully Krsna conscious is worth the effort because in this lifetime we have a chance to close the chapter on material life altogether. We have a chance to end all of our suffering and all of our lamentation. We should view any challenges, tests or austerities we encounter as worth this price. The austerities arise as we inconvenience ourselves for the preaching mission; our goal is not to become *yogis* or *tapasvis*, but pure *bhaktas*.

Austerities may occur as we try to convert the negative energy to positive energy because of our conditioning to immediate stimulation. Negative activities may give immediate stimulation that we habitually have associated with, but later turn into suffering. The higher taste, on the other hand, does not necessarily come so easily. At first, it even seems to present a type of imposition, struggle or anxiety and may even seem uninteresting, but if we continue the pursuit, it will ignite the higher consciousness. In society today, everything happens quickly and mechanically and everyone wants the "quick fix." We drive to a restaurant, place an order and immediately receive a bag full of food. We can go to another

place, choose a car and receive it. One can change almost anything these days, including one's physical appearance. If you dislike your body or face, simply change it. Plastic surgeons are making fortunes these days as more and more people want changes. They want their nose higher, their lips fuller or different breasts. People even change their sex these days. These constant physical changes are becoming as commonplace as changing clothes. And after all of these procedures, they still do not realize that they are not their bodies. Instead of helping them to understand their identity as separate from the body, the changes actually add to their bodily identification. The accessibility of quick stimulation makes it difficult for people to think beyond immediate gratification. Consequently, everything revolves around desire. Now we have supermarkets with thousands and thousands of items. You can simply drive to a mall and spend all day shopping in a single building. Once you enter, you are completely bombarded with all types of advertisements that spark your desires. As soon as you enter a store, they immediately tell you, "Ah, this suit is just for you! It will fit you perfectly! It is just the right color and will bring out your natural beauty. It is exactly what you want!" In the next store, they tell you, "This stereo is just for you. It will suit your needs perfectly." On the way home from the mall, the billboards tell you, "Enjoy this product and it will fulfill your desires!"

Since people seek pleasure and love, and tend to equate love with sex, practically every advertise-

ment attempts to stimulate our sexual desires. While advertising a car or house, a half-naked person may stand next to the product, implying that one will lead to the other. Usually, the person and the product have absolutely nothing to do with each other. For example, a chewing gum ad may present a gorgeous model dressed in the finest clothes. She has spent hours to prepare for a short chewing gum advertisement. The idea is that if you buy the chewing gum, you will enjoy other pleasures as well. A drink ad may show the Caribbean with beautiful waterfalls and nice scenery, indicating that the drink will allow you to also experience this environment with all types of sense gratification.

As *Kali-yuga* increases in domination, it will become concomitantly harder to free ourselves of self-centered desires. It becomes very formidable in the consciousness of the average person, and for this reason, we should very carefully avoid playing into the norms of society. At the same time, we are not trying to cloister ourselves by living in the mountains or in caves, nor are we in denial, in hiding or ostracizing ourselves. *The Nectar of Devotion* explains that, especially in the beginning stages, one should avoid certain environments that produce stimulation from the past. Later, when we sufficiently mature, we may enter many environments without being affected. *Maya* has many funny games. She knows our weaknesses, and if we subject ourselves to certain situations, she will capitalize on these weak spots. For this reason, we often find people

who suffer from mental disturbances attracted to Krsna consciousness. Why? Many of these people are good candidates for devotional life because their mental disturbance has resulted from some tremendous disturbance with material nature. Usually it comes from an attachment that later may spark the spirituality.

Someone who follows the sham and appears to be so-called normal in this insane world is in the greatest difficulty. It is wonderful to see a person bold enough to be different. Even materially, the greatest contributors to material society were not afraid to be different and to act. If they had remained a part of the common scene, they never could have offered such achievements to society. We should not feel any intimidation in being different because one who remains too attracted to the material energy will never become a serious devotee. As a matter of fact, the material attachments and attractions will be disqualifications.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura says:

“If the sadhaka’s attachment to sensual pleasure is not severed, then his original spiritual identity does not become manifest, in which case bhakti, which is the intrinsic flavor of the Lord’s hladini potency, cannot be transformed into bhava, or amorous spiritual mellows.”

Sri Siksastaka, 39-40

If we continue to maintain material desires, we may have to return to the material world or undergo repeated experiences in order to fulfill those desires, and this will prevent us from accessing our *suddha-svarupa* or actual form in our eternal home. We should see our many aspirations for material enjoyment as a curse, because the Supersoul will arrange certain experiences for their fulfillment that will simply distract us. We can continue pursuing such desires for many lifetimes. Sometimes we see a person with a strong desire for fame. Even some devotees strongly desire to become famous musicians, but the desire simply revolves around their own interest in fame. They may come back for many, many lifetimes in search of that fame. Another person may desire the position of a very powerful administrator. They also will have to return life after life. For them, the position of the demigods may seem to be the highest, since they have the ability to lord over the material energy and act as big controllers.

We have to be sensitive about our types of desires and honestly examine our situation. We can also place our case before the lotus feet of Radha-Damodara and beg Them to take away our free will. This type of prayer sounds strange to the materialists. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the utmost prayer entails asking the Lord to take back our free will. Why? It is the abuse and constant misuse of free will that has kept us in these bodies for so many lifetimes. It causes us to cheat ourselves, to struggle with this baggage and to suffer in this material incar-

ceration. Since Krsna fully loves us and His plan for us far surpasses any arrangements we could make for ourselves, if we simply make ourselves Krsna's slaves, we will begin to experience unlimited happiness and satisfaction. Slavery is usually considered an unimaginable position, but this is a form of spiritual craziness for the ultimate highest pleasure and satisfaction. It requires great faith to be able to fully put ourselves in that position and say, "Krsna, I am fully Yours." Lord Caitanya makes the same prayer later in the *Siksastaka*. When we fully rid ourselves of desires separate from Krsna and no longer want any interferences or obstructions to surface in our consciousness, we will be able to say:

"Dear Lord, I know what I want, but You know what I need. I have many, many notions and desires for so many things that may be very unhealthy. I do not know all the sins I have committed in previous lives or all the complications waiting for me around the corner but You know. Therefore, I put my case before You today. I have been constantly using this free will to make the wrong decisions and engage in the wrong activities, causing me to miss Your divine compassion. Today I ask You to take back my free will."

Although it appears that we must give something

up, it actually means to fully receive. It means no more curtains, no more dividers and no more separation. It means pure oneness of desire.

In another passage in the *Gita-Vali*, Srila Bhakti-vinoda Thakura states:

“Oh merciful Lord, this is my specific submission at Your lotus feet. I do not ask for bodily happiness, knowledge, wealth or followers...Let whatever attraction I presently have for material sense enjoyment be transformed into attraction and affection for Your lotus feet. I pray not only that this affection for Your lotus feet remain unvarying in all circumstances of happiness and distress, but that day after day it continues to grow by the influence of chanting Your holy names. Wherever I take birth, be it in the animal species, in the heavenly planets or in hell, may ahaituki bhakti ever grace the heart of this servant, Bhaktivinoda.”

Attraction between young boys and girls happens quite spontaneously and one does not have to undergo any mental or physical gymnastics to develop attraction to someone. In the same way, one can pray for the day when one's attraction and love for Kṛṣṇa will occur as naturally and spontaneously

as this attraction for mundane love and pleasure. We will always be crazy, either materially or spiritually. We can either be captured, dragged, forced and beaten by *kama*, lust, that pushes us and coerces us into so many activities, or we can be surrounded, captured and immersed in the *prema* which then aligns us with many wonderful connections with Krsna and His wonderful associates. It is better to be different in an insane world and develop our ultimate sanity, which involves craziness for Krsna's love. We are proud of our different lifestyle because we do not derive happiness from our residence in the material world of limitations. We eagerly desire to become eternally free.

Verse 5

The Ocean of Birth and Death

*ayi nanda-tanuja kinkaram
patitam mam visame bhavambudhau
krpaya tava pada-pankaja
sthita-dhuli-sadrsam vicintaya*

*“O son of Maharaja Nanda, Krsna, I
am Your eternal servitor yet somehow
or other I have fallen into the ocean
of birth and death. Please pick me up
from this ocean of death and place
me as one of the atoms at Your lotus
feet.”*

The topic of the fifth *sloka* is very simplistic but, at the same time, very complex, especially since the topic centers around knowledge of the *jiva*’s original spiritual identity or *svarupa-jnana*.

This verse describes an ocean of birth and death along with the *jiva*’s position in this fallen and precarious situation. It helps us to appreciate our ultimate identity as servants who have fallen into a rather disgraceful state. It is not hard to arrive at

this conclusion after analyzing the degree of harassment caused by the body and the senses. Basically we can see that the body is a package. Sometimes people critically say, "You 'Kṛṣṇa people' are very gloomy and do not appreciate the beautiful body." We appreciate beauty, but we do not view a temporary body that always harasses us and ultimately ends in devastation as real beauty. Regardless of our achievements or the type of care we render to our bodies, the end result is always the same. Whether we are wealthy, famous, tall, short, thin, fat, male, female or of a certain race, death will inevitably come in the end. In some countries, the average life span is as short as 42 years. In other countries, the average may be 54 to 75. In America, the average reaches 75 or 78. If we live the average life span, whether it is 40, 50 or 70 years, we can understand that the time is very short. As we look at our own lives, most of us are 35, 45 or 55 and a few younger or older. In most cases, if we live a normal life span, half of our lives have already passed with only a few more years remaining. When the body reaches termination, it will be burned to ashes or put into the ground to be eaten by the worms. In some cultures, the body ends up on a mountain to be eaten by the birds. Other cultures simply throw the body into a river. In all of these situations, the end is similar and the body is finished. So, we do not derive excessive excitement from the body, considering that ultimately it maintains for a period of time, deteriorates and then finishes. We look beyond the temporary and beyond the quickly approaching termination.

Beyond the Body

Beyond the body, of course, is the *atma* or soul. As we examine the body, which we ultimately must leave when it fails us, we realize that we picked it up at some point. This leads us to question the origin of the body and also its destination. In between these points, we must also inquire about the nature of our experience, our duties and the real position of the soul. Here Lord Caitanya speaks out, "My position is that I am Your eternal servitor." Caitanya Mahaprabhu speaks in the mood of a devotee. "Even though I am eternally Yours, even though we have an eternal connection, and even though our situation involves an eternal bond of love and devotion, somehow I have fallen." The soul, of course, is *sac-cid-ananda vigraha*, full of knowledge, bliss and eternality. "Yet somehow, I have fallen." Not only have I fallen, but also I have fallen into an ocean—a deep situation of birth and death. Then He pleads, "Please pick me up from this ocean of death and situate Me as an atom at Your lotus feet."

People always endeavor to find some happiness or pleasure. In this regard, Prabhupada gives the simple example of a fish out of water. A fish cannot be happy until it returns to its natural habitat.

The Material Prison

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura also gives us a few points. He says, "O Lord Krsna, O son of Nanda Maharaja, I am Your eternal servant, but as a result of my previous activities I have now fallen into this terrible

ocean of material existence" (*Sri Siksastaka*, 47). For example, a criminal who commits a serious crime gets thrown into prison and perhaps even into solitary confinement. Due to the crime, the individual receives chastisement, supposedly for rectification, but mainly he or she undergoes chastisement. Then one laments over their wretched situation and even pleads for release. The person acted improperly and now must serve a sentence. Although there may be a change of consciousness and an early parole, one must pay the necessary dues as a result of the sinful activity. Originally, the prison system was meant to provide a place for deviant or sinful people to contemplate their crimes in order to change their lifestyle and pursue a humanistic and spiritual connection. Today, the system is almost the opposite of this ideal. In some cases, a prisoner involved in a petty crime may come out rehabilitated and not get involved in lawbreaking again. However, in many cases, because the environment contains such a dismal mood filled with anger, frustration and great intensity, it will literally pollute the people and make them worse. Many criminals may leave with a more expert analysis or understanding of how to commit greater crimes.

The current penal system basically makes criminals hard-hearted, since it focuses more on chastisement than on rehabilitation. Rehabilitation involves atonement or *prayascitta* which means recognizing the crime and engaging in an activity to help remove the *karma*. It is not just a matter of chastisement.

In our *Vaisnava* philosophy, we first chastise and then forgive. When one performs an improper action without receiving chastisement, it leads to several consequences. First of all, one will not remove the *karma* connected with the crime or deviation. Secondly, there will not be any deterrent. Lastly, it will not send a message to the community that such activities are unacceptable. Gradually, the individual will increasingly engage in the deviation until other members of the community take on the same type of mentality. Unless there is the rule of law and some repercussion for those who do not follow, the improper mindsets and actions will increase. Some of the problems with the legal system develop because, when somebody commits a crime, their chastisement often depends on the skill and finesse of the lawyer. Sometimes the penalty even depends on the part of the world, one's connections with certain people, or the amount of money offered for a bribe. When the rule of law is properly honored, there is quicker attention to rewarding proper activities and giving the necessary chastisement.

The current prisons are big money making businesses, comparable to most enterprises connected with sin. In this regard, there are interesting and phenomenal facts about America. Over 8 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world and more than half of these are in the United States, China and Russia. The United States prison population rate is 680 per 100,000 of the national population. When a country needs to incarcerate

so many of its citizens in order to prevent societal disturbances, this is an indication of other serious problems. The incoherence will be found either in the citizens, the leaders or both because the criminals are products of the environment. According to a report by the Bureau of Justice, the maintenance of one prisoner typically ranges from 20,000 to 30,000 dollars a year. This is not a bad salary. The majority of prisoners would not earn this much money if they lived and worked outside, but they go to prison and this amount is required for their sustenance each year. From these facts, we can see that prisons are a big money making business. So many criminals are never apprehended, and if they do end up in prison, they may not mind because they simply have to spend a few years in a plush prison while the money waits for them on the outside. Unfortunately, it would seem that crime pays and this will cause more crime, along with an increase in criminal mentality. In some countries, if you have enough money, you can bribe your way out of almost any crime, even murder.

We are all prisoners and actually imprison ourselves to different degrees by our addictions to sense gratification that beat us and keep us bound and chained. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura describes this material existence as a dreadful ocean that people fall in to due to their misdeeds. Lord Caitanya similarly explains this position of imprisonment. He speaks for everyone in relation to our wretched situation. Srila Bhaktivinoda compares lust (*kama*), anger

(*krodha*), envy (*matsara*), and other contaminations to crocodiles who wait with ferocious mouths simply to swallow us up. Now, just visualize this imagery. One is thrown into an ocean of death and then harassed in a life-threatening situation by ferocious crocodiles of anger, envy, lust, etc. The living entity has fallen into a devastating and life-threatening situation. *Maya* just waits like these crocodiles. She simply waits for you to lose your balance or fail to notice her presence so that she can attack you. *Maya* is always waiting and always attentive, looking for an opportunity to capture us and take advantage of our weak points. Wherever one is weak, *maya* will attack in that area. Therefore, we want to look at and recognize our own weaknesses in order to eradicate them or to at least better protect our devotional creepers and ourselves. We need to deeply consider how to improve the quality and quantity of our service and how to make a serious transformation of consciousness. If we anticipate and prepare for an attack, when it finally comes, we will not be as devastated.

Waves in the Ocean of Birth and Death

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura continues to explain that we are drifting here and there in the waves of wasted hopes and misplaced anxieties. He gives such amazing descriptions of the waves in this terrible ocean of birth and death, which come to us in this dangerous and incarcerated situation. They are hopes but only wicked hopes that beat us up.

People have all types of aspirations for unnecessary and improper things. Then Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, "Lashing gales of bad association add further suffering." The devastating wind comes and goes and the waves smack us around. He refers to the wind as bad or improper association that engulfs us and causes greater anxiety. In such a condition he says, "Factually, I can see that there is no hope for shelter except Your unlimited mercy." Now he pleads, "Occasionally a small bunch of weeds can be seen floating these are the weeds of *karma*, *jnana*, *yoga*, austerity, etc. But has anyone ever crossed the mighty ocean of nescience with the help of such paltry flotsam." He sees these straws as simply an illusion of security, because the straws themselves are at the mercy of the wind, waves and currents. People seek refuge in such fallible shelters such as demigod worship, but these will not help anyone cross over the ocean of material existence or remove us from this devastating situation. Instead, we will simply pull the straw down with us as we drown. "The sturdy boat of Your holy name is the only means of crossing over this dangerous ocean of material existence. Considering all these facts with a level head, I begged for the invincible boat of Your holy name from my *guru*, which he gave me by his causeless mercy. O Lord, You are the renowned protector of Your devotees, who are souls surrendered to Your lotus feet. Therefore please accept this homeless destitute, cleanse me of all faults, and consider me as a particle of dust at Your

lotus feet" (*Sri Siksastaka*, 47). Imagine a person in the ocean with all of this confusion and harassment and they scream out and plead for a boat to come and save them.

Our Need to Serve

This position of servitude is essential to the soul. We constantly serve our senses rather than attentively serving the senses of Kṛṣṇa. We worship false or unnecessary things that have no ability to give us security or protection. I had an experience once here in America while preaching in Cleveland where my mother lived. I visited my mother for a few days and my family arranged a program with people coming from all over the city. One day, the television in the other room showed Michael Jackson performing. I noticed the program and it completely amazed me. People were literally fainting, falling down, screaming, crying and pulling their hair out. There were thousands and thousands of people and every few minutes, paramedics would pick people up off the floor, put them on a stretcher and take them to the ambulance. It was amazing. I became hypnotized for a short time with the amazing reflection that people naturally want to have someone to worship. When we do not have a genuine spiritual connection, there is a great void and hunger for something or someone in which to channel that affection and concern. And this was intense worship. Many members of the audience dressed like him, and in their homes they probably have his pictures every-

where and learn extensive information about him. They try to act like him and memorize all the words of his songs. This is comparable to a perverted form of deity worship. They have pictures everywhere, constantly hear about him, talk about him with their friends and discuss their Michael Jackson *lila*. Some people try to follow each of his performances. This is like a devotee's pilgrimage to sacred places. It was just astounding, like demigod worship.

If entities could have more direct contact with the demigods, they would see that they are very powerful and are even in charge of universes. If these mundane examples are so intense, just imagine the intensity of Krsna's arrival on the scene. Everyone must be overwhelmed as He strolls in very suave and cool. Or they see Him prepare for chivalrous activity, throwing His *chadar* over his shoulder before engaging in combat. People must be filled with amazement and awe, thinking, "O, did you see what Krsna did? Amazing!" These mundane examples can only provide a small indication of what the living entity is missing by suffering in this ocean of misery and trying to gain flickering pleasures. As Michael Jackson sang, the people sang along and literally experienced some *tamo-guna* ecstasy. This is not *bhava* or *prema* in a spiritual sense, but some affection and attraction exist along with appreciation and intense worship. I remember when he once came to Washington; he had more security than the president. With all of the vehicles, it seemed almost like an army.

Our prison is not a very high level prison, so different entities that come into these scenes from higher prisons will be impressive because of their *sakti*. If such personalities could bring people to Krsna, it would be powerful because, as *Bhagavad-gita* 3.21 says:

*yad yad acarati sresthas
tat tad evetaro janah
sa yat pramanam kurute
lokas tad anuvartate*

*“Whatever action a great man
performs, common men follow.
And whatever standards he sets
by exemplary acts, all the world
pursues.”*

Unfortunately, the opposite occurs because many of these types of personalities sing degrading songs simply meant to narcotize the people who constantly repeat their mantras. Lord Caitanya emphasizes the chanting of the holy name, which is liberating. The opposite is known as *gramya-katha* or unnecessary use of the tongue, which incarcerates the living entity that much more. We also see in so many places an increase in gangs. It is not just teenagers but sometimes it is mature adults also. Why would a mature adult enter a gang? As the society becomes cultureless due to *Kali-yuga*, people become devoid of friendship and higher aspirations. They lack

goals and have no higher purpose because they believe in nothing and nobody believes in them. As a result, they become even more lost in this ocean of misery and consequently substitute the idea of community, unity and fraternity. They substitute that which genuinely exists as a part of the living entity in his relationship and service to Krsna with artificial arrangements. Gangs usually have strict codes of ethics. The mafia, for example, has strict codes of bonding and protecting each other. When they meet, they embrace each other, kiss one another and will even die for each other. When there are misconceptions about the goal of life, about giving one's dedication to *sadhu*, *guru* and Krsna, one's dedication will have to go somewhere else. The dedication usually goes into these situations that devastate and prevent spiritual knowledge and life.

Finding the Highest Service

The position of servitude and worship exists within everyone. Srila Prabhupada tells a story about a village man who endeavored to make a deep connection in his service. First he saw the mayor and decided to serve him considering his position important. However, he soon noticed that the mayor gave tax money and homage to the tax collectors who came on behalf of the Governor. He then went to serve the Governor. He constantly looked for the best service connection and the greatest person to serve. While serving the Governor, he noticed a group of men who arrived on horseback to collect

revenue or viceroy for the King. He then went to serve the King. While serving the King, he noticed a sage who came and gave advice to the King about ruling his kingdom. One day, he approached the sage, "Are you the greatest person to serve?" The sage explained about someone greater than himself, and advised him to go to the temple and serve their most worshipable Lord Narayana if he wanted to find the greatest person to serve. The village gentleman was serious and sincere. He asked the right questions and, after receiving appropriate guidance, he readily acted on the instructions. He immediately went to the temple of Lord Narayana, but he arrived late and the temple was closed. He tried to enter, but since the doors were locked, he slept in front of the temple. In the morning, several *brahmanas* arrived and saw the village man with the Deity's *chadar* covering him. They became furious, thinking, "Who is this rogue who came into the temple and took the Deity's cloth to use for himself?" But, when they tried to open the doors, they found them to be closed and locked. Since they locked the doors the night before and found the doors still locked in the morning, they understood that he could not have entered. The Deity greatly appreciated and reciprocated with this simple, but sincere and serious village man, who understood the value of service and deeply endeavored to find the greatest person to serve. He then remained at the temple and became a *pujari*.

The living entity should always ask such questions. Why am I in this miserable state? How did I

get here and how can I get out? What is necessary? After finding what is necessary, one should very eagerly act upon it. Unfortunately, people are so distracted that it becomes hard for them to engage in deep introspection. *Maya* plays so many games and makes it hard for people to even think because of the constant bombardment. The mind is so funny. Sometimes we begin to look at our past and think that, as devotees, we have missed something. We have been chanting Hare Krsna for years, engaging in services, and we think, "Look at my school friend, my old buddy, girlfriend or my old acquaintance. They are doing this and that, and if I had not been a devotee, I could have put fifteen or twenty years into another engagement." Sometimes we even think, "I have wasted so much time." If our ultimate goal was to excel in material life, then we definitely wasted our time by involving ourselves in devotional service. However, if we genuinely want to pursue spiritual life, then there is no question of waste. If we eagerly want to serve *maya*, then we definitely wasted time. We missed many, many years of intense service to *maya*. The mind plays funny games because, when we reflect back to so-called pleasurable activities in the past, the mind only remembers the flickering pleasure associated with the sense gratification. The mind does not simultaneously remind you of all the misery and suffering associated with the insignificant sense pleasure. We should view these memories as ghosts trying to haunt us, because when someone allows these distorted memories to

remain in the consciousness, the mind will unfortunately try to return to past habits and even act on them. It is very unfortunate. When Prabhupada gave *sannyasa*, he explained the devastating effect of becoming envious of the materialists. One may think, "Look at me! I just sleep in my little room with a small mat, but look at those people! I bet they sleep in a nice bed and have a beautiful car. Just look at my car. It always breaks down, forcing me to wait on the side of the road while people continue passing me. What am I doing?" In this way, we begin to envy the materialists. Someone else may think, "I just sing little *bhajan*s but I could be like Michael Jackson or another great star. People would be in awe as I walk onto the stage." This envy is very dangerous because we will begin to want to engage in the activities of the materialists at the expense of our devotional life.

Begging for Mercy

This next passage comes from *The Beggar One*, my book of short meditations. It is in the mood of begging for Kṛṣṇa's mercy and looking at the living entity's wretched situation. I would like to share one of these meditations because this topic, knowledge of the identity of the soul, is rather simple but also quite complex. This meditation is called, "Your Success is our Freedom." This meditation is written as a discussion between the senses, body, mind, intelligence and the soul. The senses do their thing, the mind does its thing and the intelligence does

something else. Sometimes we have difficulty in seeing all the different aspects of this package. For example, sometimes we try to read and the mind would like to absorb itself in the subject matter. However, while trying to focus, the body feels tired. The mind and intelligence want to absorb themselves in the subject matter but the body says, "No." Then you try again to read and really want to continue with your area of exploration. You want to reach the next chapter, but the next thing you know, the book ends up on the floor along with the body. The body says it is tired but the mind and intelligence feel differently. After awhile, we may actually have to let the body rest and the mind and intelligence will finally agree. As another example, imagine one of your most embarrassing situations. Your intelligence would like to forget the entire incident and pretend that it never happened, but the mind continues to remind you of the past. You relive the embarrassing event in your mind each time the memory returns. This short meditation particularly gives more attention to the distinctness of the soul but simultaneously deals with the whole package. The soul has to deal with the house or body that it uses which includes the mind and intelligence. At this point, the soul has a bad deal because of the package it must carry around for a period of time. The following meditation is a conversation between the soul and the entire package.

"Today my soul came forward

and spoke to me in a very sweet and loving voice. My dear brother, we who were one are now acting as two separate entities."

When we go back to Godhead, all of this *mahat-tattva* will no longer interfere and the *atma*, or soul, will expand into the actual body associated with Krsna.

"I have been accompanying you in different material bodies for thousands of lifetimes."

In many cases, the soul remains incarcerated in bodies for hundreds and thousands of lifetimes, trying different types of prison environments based on previous patterns.

"Each time I am sentenced to another body, my desires to return home to the Kingdom of God increases. I thought the last body I was in would be the final one. There were unfortunately some distractions, which have brought me back again."

For example, sometimes a criminal becomes an ideal prisoner and plans for parole. Then he may suddenly have a fight or break another rule, and find himself back in a cell. He thinks he will

gain his freedom, but soon finds a locked door and different bars staring him in the face. Prabhupada explains in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* that when the soul enters the womb again, the entity gains awareness of hundreds of lifetimes of experiences. The living entity then feels miserable and thinks, "Oh no, not again. I am in this situation and I have to take another body again!" The entity has that awareness and material life continues.

"My dear beloved brother, we are connected by much more than you can presently realize. Our destinies are interlocked, although I watch you everyday just as the Supersoul watches us both. I am most disturbed when I witness you doing things that keep us away from the association of the Divine Couple. This does not in any way take away from my love for you, but it is my love of you that causes me to experience such disturbances. This material world is an empty, lonely, morbid prison, which pales in comparison to our real home. No one there is a stranger."

This refers to the material world as a prison because the soul's real home is in the spiritual kingdom. This emphasizes the nature of the material world, which involves so many enemies, terrible

relationships, attacks and assaults. In the spiritual world, no one is a stranger.

“On the contrary, there is an ongoing love affair between every living being.”

We feel so lonely and constantly look for love but can never quite find it.

“Every day we have the most loving and intoxicating exchanges with the Supreme. When one of us gets special affection from the Lord or His Divine Consort, we all experience the same joy simultaneously. But here in these material hells, the living entities are extremely self-centered, exploitive, offensive and misguided.”

The Siksastaka verse describes *matsara* or extreme enviousness of each other.

“My beloved brother, I cannot bear another lifetime away from spiritual associates. At home, they are aware of my desperate efforts to return to them.”

Imagine the soul, the real us, suffering in this ocean of misery with constant attacks from croco-

diles, the wind, improper desires, bad association, etc. We want out of this prison and our ultimate associates in the spiritual kingdom have much greater love and concern for us than we can imagine.

"Their love for me is so much greater than my love for them, just as my love for you is far greater than your understanding and love for me."

The soul is speaking to its mind, intelligence and body.

"Above my own desires to return home, I do not want to cause any well wishing residents at home any disturbance."

For example, as we have previously said, if a drunken person comes to the temple, they would speak out or enter in obnoxious ways and be unable to follow the proper etiquette in the temple environment. Similarly, in our contaminated state, with all of our improper desires, sinful activities and even mixed devotional activities, we would simply be a disturbance in the spiritual kingdom. Such imperfection cannot enter the spiritual environment. The drunken person can enter the temple and have the opportunity to become fortunate considering the availability of everything, but they would not be

able to take advantage due to their current situation. Here, the soul understands its position in having to deal with its package. Similarly, a drunken person who understands some of the etiquette in the temple environment will realize that they cannot come in and cause any disturbance.

*"Nor do I want you to remain
a part of this miserable world of
limitations."*

The soul cannot return to the spiritual kingdom because of the craziness in the mind, the body and the senses. For instance, if you become a good devotee and have a drunkard as a friend, you may want to come into the temple but cannot visit with your friend. It would not be proper to bring him into such an atmosphere. However, the friendship locks the two of you together and, as a result, you do not come to the temple because of his association. The soul is in this position.

*"Therefore, I have become more
active in your consciousness to help
guide you to self-realization. After
all, your success is freedom for us
both. My dear beloved brother, there
are some areas you need to work at
seriously to guarantee our freedom."*

The soul has higher knowledge, but has to deal

with the present situation until the mind and intelligence change and restrict the senses.

"You must become more selfless and you must allow your natural love for the Godhead to fully flourish. I then replied, 'For so many years I have been trying to be selfless, but still I am far from the goal.'"

Now the mind and intelligence are responding to the soul and the soul is answering.

"My soul exclaimed, 'Those who think the Supreme Lord is far away will never attain Him, but those who understand that He is ever-accessible and monitoring all activities, will attain Him in the near future.'"

The mind and intelligence explain their previous endeavors to become serious, dedicated and selfless but feel the task to be impossible. The soul replies that, if one thinks that God is far away, it will be an impossible task and one will not be able to attain Him.

"By the mercy of the Lord, you have been given a guru, so your selflessness is simply a matter of serving your guru with more love and

care. Give up all of your individualized desires and live for his pleasure, as he lived and lives for you."

Just as Srila Prabhupada lived and lives for his disciples, give up your individual desires and live for his pleasure.

"My beloved, as far as your loving the Lord, this is your natural condition. So free yourself from all remaining ignorance, doubts, fears and enviousness. You have been given everything that you need to uncover that natural love."

As long as the mind and intelligence continue with their "stuff," the soul will remain imprisoned. The soul is pleading with the lower self to abandon the improper activities.

"So why not today fall into the Lord's loving embrace? His arms have been extended, waiting for us to return. Speed up, beloved. Hold on to me tighter as we run our last lap back to the Divine Couple in Their realm of pure love. These last tests and challenges will be most difficult, but together we will soon be successful."

Let us not keep our Lovers waiting any longer. My beloved brother, always try to remember that you have many helpers cheering you on. Your success is freedom for both of us. I will personally help you at every step. I love you, for your body is our means of escape."

I included this meditation to add to the mood of the discussion regarding the living entity's incarcerated state. As Bhaktivinoda Thakura has emphasized, the entity is in this terrible ocean of suffering, filled with bad association, lust, envy and greed, which keeps the entity completely entangled. A strong boat in the form of the holy name is available for the living entity to cross over the ocean of material suffering. We also consider the importance of having sufficient dedication, taking shelter of a *guru*, and engaging in proper activity with *sadhu*. Then, the difficult ocean, which is normally a formidable obstacle, can be crossed over by the proper captain. In these prayers, Lord Caitanya presents the mood of the perfect devotee who cries out, analyzes, evaluates, focuses and pleads for Krsna's love and association. Although He is Krsna Himself, He shows us the proper spirit to have as a devotee.

Questions & Answers

Question: This question is about obtaining freedom. In our case, we pray to our spiritual master to obtain

freedom. However, the Christians pray to Jesus, the object of their reverence. Since Jesus promises to send them to the spiritual kingdom, what planet do they attain?

Answer: Jesus emphasizes the accessibility of heaven and those who genuinely connect with him can reach the heavenly kingdom. Devotees of the Lord enter into all types of environments, including hells and heavens. When the living entities move into different environments, they still have chances to connect with actual devotees of Krsna and to receive guidance if they so desire. Often, certain teachers, saints or prophets play a role in the master plan. Prophet Muhammad also played such a role. They gave basic, fundamental teachings, but people have trouble with even these basics. However, if genuine followers properly adhere to such teachers, they can connect with the results offered by these teachers. This will help them advance to a higher level that will prepare them to make a transcendental connection. A pious person is a greater candidate to receive transcendental knowledge.

Question: In relation to the mind, you mentioned that certain thoughts enter and remain in the consciousness, causing one to reflect on previous activities and even stimulate past desires. What process would you offer or suggest on a practical day-to-day basis to clear the mind of such thoughts?

Answer: First I mentioned that the mind tricks us with memories of pleasurable sensations but fails to show the negativity or pain associated with the temporary pleasures. Most importantly, we must realize that every sinful activity or sense gratification that we involve ourselves in comes with a corresponding chastisement. Prabhupada emphasizes that there is no happiness in the material world. Sometimes this statement bewilders people. They argue, "When I take intoxication, I feel some stimulation. When I have illicit sex, I feel this stimulation." But we cannot really call an activity pleasurable if it constantly results in an experience of chastisement. If a button exists which gives a pleasurable sensation, but then produces a type of suffering after pressing it, the pleasure is simply a façade. We will simply undergo many miserable situations. We also have to look at that connection. When the mind starts taking us back, we have to use the intelligence and connect with the soul in order to think, "No! This will result in serious consequences. I do not want to be in such miserable conditions again, lifetime after lifetime."

We can stop the sinful reflections in the mind when a genuine, higher taste begins to develop. However, this is not so easy, because before the higher taste develops, we will have to undergo a transitional stage without the lower or higher tastes. We first stop the lower engagements but the higher activities and reflections may not be well grounded or established in our consciousness. If one lacks

sufficient strength, faith and encouraging association, one will return to the previous stimulation. We constantly see devotees who return to previous patterns because they seek some stimulation or pleasure and have not yet experienced it in devotional service. The first problem is that they are not following the science properly; therefore, they are not getting sufficient results. Second, they are conditioned to immediate gratification. Sense gratification happens in this way. It gives some immediate reciprocation but later it brings misery. Spiritual life seems to be an inconvenience at first because it requires reconditioning, but later it will bring great happiness. In the interim, especially if our service is filled with too many *aparadhas*, the prescription will not give the full benefit. If the person does not stop the *aparadhas*, after a while they will return to their old patterns. If you keep running into a wall, you have two choices. You can either finally jump over it or continue bumping into the wall over and over again. After hitting the wall enough times, you may finally decide that the pursuit is worthless. Or else you may begin to think that nothing is on the other side and therefore return to previous patterns and situations. In a devotee's life, if he or she fails to eventually make progress and continues to run into the same obstacles without moving beyond them, at some point they will turn back. When the mind begins to revert to old patterns, we have to drag it forward by taming it or by absorbing it in spiritually stimulating engagements.

Question: If a devotee has a hard time moving beyond certain *anarthas*, what can help them to move beyond these obstacles? All devotees have *anarthas* but how do we come together and help each other jump over the wall instead of running into it?

Answer: Each devotee has a duty to help remind others about the goals. It is not always pleasant to remind each other, especially if we are not ready to accept that something is wrong with us. If we sincerely accept our weaknesses, when someone reminds us of them, we actually feel happy because we have a chance to improve in that area. In Srila Prabhupada's example of the village gentleman, the man wanted to discover the best service connection. As soon as one situation revealed a higher point of service, he eagerly followed because his heart was genuine. Consequently, he was able to serve Krsna. If we are really genuine, we will enthusiastically receive help and discover the areas we need work on. We will realize, "Krsna is so kind that He is helping me understand the things that separate me from experiencing His love."

If you have a sickness but cannot discover the specific problem, it will be difficult to find the proper prescription. Sometimes people have an illness and they are full of anxiety because, after visiting many doctors and even holistic practitioners, they cannot discover the exact nature of their problem. This lack of knowledge can devastate one even more than

knowing their type of illness, because one cannot even begin to remedy the situation or look for a prescription. So, we really want to thank those who remind us of our *anarthas*. Then the question is, "Why do they have to speak so harshly? Couldn't they do it more tactfully? They could say, 'My dear wonderful, beautiful and most exalted devotee. Please let me take this most merciful chance to let you know that I am your servant, your eternal servant. I want you to know that, as your servant, I think that you are in a little *maya*.'" However, the help comes in different ways. Krsna's love may come in an embrace or sometimes His love seemingly manifests as a kick. We should be eager to use, learn and grow from any situation, thanking Krsna and *guru* for the help to look closer at ourselves.

When I was a *brahmacari* on the traveling party, I would sometimes ask my associates to tell me what I do improperly, what I do that bothers them and how to improve. I would keep a little notebook and always write things down since my mind is dull. Whatever they would tell me, I would write it down. The responses would vary. At times, a person would make the harshest comments and the mind would say, "It's not me, it's you! You have that problem even more than me." Since I knew that the mind is crazy, I would just write down whatever they told me and close the book. Maybe two days later, I would open the book again and take it very seriously. I considered that I had these associations for a reason and there are no accidents. And, even if another person

and I seemingly could not get along, I would still ask and take their comments even more seriously. I would genuinely try to work on their comments. If somebody said, "You chant too loud, you eat too much or you sleep too much," I would write it down and change because it interfered with the other person's service. I would also consider that, since we have to associate together, I want to do more service and encourage someone else to do more service in order to offer more service to the spiritual master. If we really want to grow, every situation can provide an opportunity for growth. We should try this technique on a practical level. We can speak with those in our environments and ask for advice on how to improve in our devotional life and service. We should take their advice seriously and not just ask in a sentimental or mechanical way. Someone may say, "I think you should be more competent, more clean, less agitated, less aggressive or listen more instead of reacting." We should take it seriously. Someone else may enthusiastically give an entire list and we should accept it, appreciating that our godbrother, godsister or devotee is taking time to help us become better servants.

Many of our devotees in Washington will ask each other these questions from time to time. It is a difficult process because you do not ask only your good friend, but you ask many different devotees for ideas on how to become a better servant. You can ask them, "What do I do that is distracting and a both-eration? It will help me to understand how to better

serve the *Vaisnavas* and the *guru*.” Then, write it down because ultimately, if someone is honest, the words may not be pleasing to the mind. We all have so many faults or we would not be in this situation. If we did not have any faults, we would not have to carry around all this baggage. Since we have so many faults, we want to be attentive in order to put them behind us and to unlock the shackles of these imprisoned states.

Question: Does *maya* help us run faster by chastising us?

Answer: This relates to the question, “Why does Krsna allow *maya*?” Krsna and the devotees who work on behalf of the Lord are calling us home. We are in a very dangerous situation. *Maya* also helps us move toward Krsna. She presents different offers and then gives the consequences. At some point, the intelligent person begins to think, “What is going on? Let me stop all of this nonsense. Let me change my position, consciousness and habits in order to move out of this hellish situation.” *Maya* works for Krsna. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura explains that, although *maya* seems to be against us, she is really for us. *Maya* constantly presents different tests to see if we are ready to return home—if we pass the test, we can become certified. *Maya* will test us in so many ways and, if we are not really ready, she will simply distract us and show us our lack of readiness. In this sense, *maya* is wonderful, but we obviously

do not want to fall into her clutches. When we no longer fall prey to *maya* or give in to her, it indicates that we are ready for Krsna. Somebody cannot come into the temple drunk because they will cause all kinds of problems. If we have a security guard at the temple door, they will carefully scrutinize the drunkard if he returns a second time. The guard will carefully evaluate his position in order to see if he is proper. If he is proper, then he may enter. The guard will test him because of his past record of deviation. He will need to prove that he has abandoned his deviant behavior. We have been deviant for so many lifetimes and intoxicated by many illusions; consequently, *maya* carefully watches us. If we pass the test, then *maya* will say, "Okay, you can enter."

Verse 6

Flowing Tears of Love

The sixth *sloka* of the *Sri Siksastaka* deals primarily with the way in which we experience good fortune as we come closer to the Lord.

*nayanam galad-asru-dharaya
vadanam gadgada-ruddhaya gira
pulkair nicitam vapuh kada
tava nama-grahane bhavisyati*

*“Oh my Lord, when will my eyes be
decorated with tears of love flowing
constantly when I chant Your holy
name? When will my voice choke up
and when will the hairs of my body
stand on end at the recitation of Your
name?”*

These powerful offerings by Lord Caitanya constantly draw us back to the scriptures. Here we examine Lord Caitanya in the mood of a perfect devotee who shows by example how to attain Him. It is especially significant that Lord Caitanya has deliv-

ered the knowledge Himself. Sometimes a person has good intentions, but does not have the ability to follow through. At other times, people simply create a façade with no intention of following through. Kṛṣṇa presents the complete science of how to return to Godhead, and as Lord Caitanya, he demonstrates the process personally. He has the ability to carry out whatever he presents, because all things come from Him and are under His control.

Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa Himself who comes as the perfect devotee and gives a complete understanding of the process required to reach Him. It does not lack anything or involve sentimentality because He is fully able to deliver according to His promise. *The Nectar of Devotion* elaborates on *bhava*, which is the early stage of *prema*. This *sloka*, which reflects *bhava* and the initial stages of *prema* is right in line. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura explains that spiritual life begins with sincere faith followed by *sadhu-sanga*. In their association, we begin to practice the nine-fold path of *bhakti*, namely *śravanam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaranam*, *pada-sevanam*, *arcanam*, *vandanam*, *dāsyam*, *sakhyam* and *ātma-nivedanam*. As a result of these engagements, one begins to attain certain levels of unfoldment. *The Nectar of Devotion* shows how we progress to the stages of *ruci*, attachment, and finally *bhava*.

Our Natural State

Bhava, the initial stage of *prema*, is the actual, natural position of the living entity. We cannot look at

the spiritual world or the activities of our real home with the perceptions and mindsets of the material world. We need to understand that the activities in the spiritual world are the reality and everything else is only a perverted reflection. It would be strange to try to use the perverted reflection to understand the reality. We will come up with all kinds of strange conceptions. We can take this reflection one step further, realizing that every action or thought in its natural state is all meant for Krsna. For example, someone may dance, sing or cook, but every activity is actually meant for Krsna in the real sense. In the material world, all of these activities occur outside of their natural connection. Singing in the material world has no deep meaning. Real singing means singing for the glorification of Krsna. Dancing, playing musical instruments or dressing nicely is really meant for Krsna. Dressing without dressing for Krsna is just an activity that occurs in this ocean of material suffering in the imprisoned state.

Unnatural Conditioning

Strange things occur in prison since it is a very unnatural place and just a strange replica of the reality. The prison facility is a city and culture of its own. In prison, cigarettes gain the value of money and many patterns arise that mimic the patterns of society. Power becomes the rule of law and people surrender to different types of situations based on that environment. Death and violence may mean very little to them. One prisoner can beat, stab

or even kill another without feeling any compunction. Although human activities continue in prison, they become perverted and strange. Aristotle and Plato expressed this idea in their writings, using the example of beings that live in a cave. In our own philosophy, we find the example of the frog in the well. If someone tries to see or analyze a situation from a limited perspective, like a frog that has spent his entire life in the confines of a small well, their analysis will simply result in confusion. The activities of the separated, material world are confusing, and always full of miseries because they do not give a real connection.

Reflections of the Spiritual World

When we hear pastimes from *Krsna Book* or hear about the symptoms of *bhava* such as *anubhava*, *vyabhicaribhava* and *sthayibhava*, which involve one's hair standing on end, crying, dancing or hiccupping, we can appreciate that anything done in the consciousness of pleasing Krsna is the real thing. Otherwise, things that happen within the confinement of the material body and material world are only perverted reflections of spiritual activities. Dancing exists in the spiritual world, but here people disco dance and belly dance. Dressing exists there, but here people put on all different types of costumes and decorate their dying external bodies. Spiritual life is not so farfetched—it is the real thing done in the real way. The Lord and His pure representatives view our obsession with our material shackles with great concern.

This underscores how the impersonalists and voidists are so far off, although they consider their engagements to be spiritual. The voidists think that spiritual life is a negation of what we normally perceive with our limited, perverted physical vision. The impersonalists think that spiritual life is void of heterogeneity, variety, interactions and relationships. Even worse are the *sahajiyas*, who think that their “spiritual” practices can be done in the consciousness of lust. Srila Prabhupada warned us about these categories. He warned us about gross involvement in material life, which is a total disqualification for spiritual acceleration. He warned us about the voidists and to an even greater extent about the impersonalists. However, he warned us the most about the *sahajiyas*. If we look closely, we see how Srila Prabhupada spoke about the impersonalists but he stressed the dangers of *sahajiya* philosophy even more. That which seems so close but is not the actual reality can bewilder us even more. When someone makes counterfeit money very expertly, or has cut glass that closely resembles a diamond, it will cause confusion. We need the proper vision in order to properly see. If one looks through glasses or instruments that have not been “tinged with the salve of love,” and the eyes have not been opened through the process of *guru* and *sastra*, the distorted vision will simply lead to a disturbance. That which does not coincide with the revealed scriptures will cause serious disturbances.

Symptoms of Love

These *Sri Siksastaka* prayers have infinite depth to explore. This verse focuses on the external expressions of *bhava*. The *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.3.25-26 describes the nine symptoms or *anubhavas* that manifest in the stage of *bhava*. We will look deeper at what these nine symptoms entail and what level of consciousness allows us to experience such symptoms, which grade into *prema*. The first symptom, *ksanti* means that, although a call for agitation may be present, the devotee's heart remains undisturbed. *Avyarthā kalatva*, the second symptom, means that a devotee does not waste time in activities unrelated to the cultivation of *bhakti*. We understand that *kala* or time itself is a part of the *mahatattva*. In time, everything material deteriorates and ultimately reaches devastation. If we look at the conception of time through the vision of the material world, it seems strange. However, if we see everything in relation to Kṛṣṇa's service, we understand that Kṛṣṇa always was and always will be. This gives us a different perspective on time altogether. In the material world, time basically refers to a material object's period of duration, its deterioration and its ultimate devastation—normally relative to a living entity's particular body. Something may have a longer life span and something may have a shorter life span, but the body only has so much longevity. How do we understand an environment where nothing dies and nothing deteriorates? It is not so easy to comprehend based on normal percep-

tion, but we can understand the existence of intervals and experiences.

When Will it Happen?

These *Siksastaka* prayers teach lessons for practical application and we should try to apply them to our own lives. Lord Caitanya emphasizes the possibilities such as tears of love. When will it happen? It is accessible. When will it happen? When will they overflow constantly when I chant Your holy name? When will it happen? When will my voice choke up? When will the hairs of my body stand on end at the recitation of Your name? It will happen when the *anarthas* and all of the previously described obstacles are removed and when *anyabhilasa*, or desires separate from Krsna, no longer remain in the heart. Instead, *anyabhilasita sunyam*, no desires separate from Krsna's desires, will remain. It does not mean that we are desireless, because only dead matter has no desires. Rather, it means having desires related to Krsna's desires. Persons who have attained *bhava* want to use all of their time for Krsna and for the cultivation of *bhakti*. This mindfulness will manifest according to the maturity of our consciousness. A neophyte devotee will have many activities and desires not associated with devotional service. For example, a new *bhakta* or *bhaktin* will have many attachments and desires, and they may still feel comfortable around people who are not very spiritual. As one waters and nourishes the creeper, it will grow and mature and want even more

nourishment. For example, if we usually eat good cooking but later receive badly prepared food, we will have little taste for it since we have previously appreciated nourishing *prasadam* or foodstuffs. So, one who relishes the *bhakti* cannot find pleasure in hearing or associating with the mundane. Hearing discussions about mundane topics will sound like noise, and mundane activities will seem ghostly. Again, if we feel too comfortable in such environments, we can understand that the development of *bhakti* and *bhava* is far from being established in our consciousness.

The third symptom of *bhava* is *virakti*, or detachment from the objects of sense enjoyment. This is almost self-explanatory. If we focus our energy in lower pursuits, we will not have sufficient energy left for the higher engagements. As we detach from the gratification of our own senses, we will attach ourselves to the satisfaction of the senses of the Lord, which concomitantly gives nourishment to the soul. The fourth symptom is *mana sunyata*, or pridelessness. When we have too much pride and consider ourselves to be of great importance, we cannot have deep appreciation of the Lord.

The fifth symptom is *asa bandha*. In one of his prayers, Srila Rupa Gosvami describes this quality when he says that he has hope against hope of somehow receiving the mercy of Krsna although he is very unqualified. This prayer is very powerful. He feels unqualified and unworthy of Krsna's great boons, benedictions, blessings, compassion and

love. Although he sees himself as unworthy, he believes the Lord's mercy to be greater than His law. He understands that the mercy is ultimately necessary and is everyone's birthright. Therefore, although he feels unworthy, he does not remove himself from standing in the line and waiting for the opportunity to receive such blessings. He refuses to lose focus, step out of line and miss the opportunity, although he does not feel worthy of such a benediction. He remains very determined and fixed, knowing what is available for those who stay in the line. He explains the situation in this way. He has firm hope of obtaining *Bhagavan*, Krsna. The sixth symptom of *bhava* is *utkantha*, or intense longing for the Lord. The seventh is *nama gane sada ruci*, ever relishing a strong taste to chant the holy name. The eighth attribute is *asaktis tad gunakhyane*, attachment for hearing and chanting the qualities of Krsna. The last one is *pritis tad vasati sthale*, love for the place of Krsna's pastimes. From these nine symptoms of *bhava*, *The Nectar of Devotion* discusses the many different subdivisions of *bhava* and then *prema*.

Recognizing Authentic Devotion

There is one interesting story of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and several of his disciples. The disciples wanted their spiritual master to meet this *Rama bhakta* who was a very famous devotee and always seemed to be in ecstasy. People would come from distant places in order to have his association. He always lamented living in his body

while experiencing separation from his worshipful Lord Rama. One day, he felt such intense separation that he wanted to eliminate his physical body, considering that the material body imprisons the soul in the material realm. With this intention, he literally dove in front of a train in order to commit suicide. He could no longer tolerate the separation, and although the train ran over his legs, he continued to chant, "Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!" So, the disciples of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura had good feelings about this person and wanted their spiritual master to meet him. They deeply appreciated their own spiritual master and eagerly desired the meeting of these great personalities. When Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura met the *bhakta*, he simply inquired, "Is your relationship with Lord Rama direct or indirect?" The devotee explained that he felt great anxiety due to his separation from Lord Rama. He had so much love for his Lord and was definitely experiencing a direct relationship.

The *suddha bhaktas* never display such arrogance. The *acarya* could understand that this *Rama bhakta* was experiencing ecstasy or shadow ecstasy but not pure *prema*. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura looked over at his disciples and said, "Let's go." They then left because what Lord Caitanya has given far surpasses *bhukti*, *mukti*, and *siddhi*. It goes far beyond even the initial levels of ecstasy and far beyond shadow ecstasy. Shadow ecstasy can manifest in two different ways. One way occurs when someone is in touch with a very powerful devotee

of the Lord, a pure devotee on the platform of pureness, *suddha bhakti*, and the devotion carried by such a great soul spills over simply through their association. Those in the association of such a devotee will feel very stimulating absorption and even ecstasy. A devotee named Sudama, who was Srila Prabhupada's personal servant for a period of time and also president of the temple in Hawaii among a few other temples, spoke about some very wonderful experiences with Srila Prabhupada on one of the Prabhupada Memory videotapes. One time in Hawaii, they went to see Srila Prabhupada in his room and he was crying like anything. Tears were shooting from his eyes as he spoke about Krsna. The devotees asked Srila Prabhupada if something was wrong and Prabhupada started to explain that his spiritual master is so kind. Then the few devotees who came in the room also started to cry. Sudama said the room was totally surcharged with Prabhupada's intense absorption, reflection and meditation. This happened a couple of times. Normally, Srila Prabhupada did not display his sentiment or deep feelings.

There were times when he chanted the *Jaya Radha-Madhava* prayers, and looked at the Deities, and his bodily color would change and tears would shoot out of his eyes. During the period before he left the planet, and especially in the last month, there was very little checking of his emotions. Someone would mention a cow and Prabhupada would start crying. Simple things would set off intense expressions of

prema. A pure devotee sees everything in relation to Krsna, but we see everything as separate from Krsna. When such great devotees come to preach, they tone themselves down in order to relate to the craziness of the material world. As Srila Prabhupada thought of Krsna's pastimes on the planet, whatever was said, done or read would often ignite such expressions. In this situation in Hawaii, the devotees were very new. Sudama had only been a devotee for one or two years and did not fully understand the situation. They simply came in to this surcharged room and found Srila Prabhupada in a sort of trance with tears in his eyes. This is one expression of shadow ecstasy. Sometimes Krsna will give a new person, who initially joins the movement, a type of unusual taste or experience. In Narada Muni's case, Krsna appeared before him personally, but told him that he would not see Him again until his next lifetime. He wanted Narada to continue striving for that which was available and to stay in line in order to receive. Our *acaryas*, including our great grandfather Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, were in levels of absorption far beyond any mysticism or shadow ecstasy. This *Rama bhakta* was always chanting *Rama* and was experiencing something beyond the ordinary, but considering Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's position as a resident of the spiritual world and fully in tune with Krsna's service, such expressions were unimpressive. *The Nectar of Devotion* also explains that, as long as one desires fame, material facility, subtle mystical facility or other material pleasures,

one will never be able to become steady in devotion. We can even approach the initial stages of *bhava* only to slide down if we do not remain fixed in unmotivated, uninterrupted devotion. As long as we maintain desires separate from Krsna's desires, the improper desires will become cancerous, grow and create all types of infections that ultimately bring devastation.

Where is Krsna Prema?

I would like to include another passage from my book *The Beggar One* entitled "Where is Krsna Prema?" *Prema* is available and is waiting for us but we frequently put it on hold.

"Please forgive me. I have no time. I'm in a terrific hurry. I'm looking for Krsna Prema. I have waited lifetimes to meet Him. If you like, you can look with me. I have heard He is in town."

Love of God is around and accessible. When we hear about it, we should be very uneasy and very eager to try to see how to receive and connect with it. We should be ready to align with any person or situation conducive to its development. Simultaneously, we should want to run away from anything that is not *bona fide*, not proper, or that causes interference. Any situation or association that does not help to establish *prema bhakti* is a disturbance.

"Please forgive me. I have no time. I'm in a terrific hurry. Krsna Prema will be here soon. Everything is so untidy. I must see that everything is in order to receive Him. If you like, you can help me."

When we expect a guest, maybe a good friend or an important person, we want everything to be nice and tidy. We might even call some people to help us prepare and remain focused before the guests arrive.

"Please forgive me. I have no time. I'm in a terrific hurry. I overslept. Today I have an appointment to meet Krsna Prema. He is very hard to see. Finally I met one of His agents, who arranged a meeting for me."

We cannot reach these goals without a connection with Krsna's representatives. Even in some very powerful secular organizations, we cannot simply join. For instance, in certain secret societies, you can only join if a member feels that your qualities will add to the mood of their activities and commitments. No one returns to the spiritual world without the assistance of, or a connection with, a resident of the spiritual world. There is no question.

"Please forgive me. I have no time.

I'm in a terrific hurry. If I stop to socialize, I may miss my only chance to associate with Krsna Prema. You know He is quite demanding and always on time."

We can get distracted and detoured in so many ways. We need to socialize but any serious connection that hinders our progression towards the ultimate goal simply wastes time.

"Please forgive me. I have no time. I'm in a terrific hurry. I do not have time to eat or sleep. Even if I had time, I have no desire, as today or tomorrow I will be meeting with Krsna Prema. Please forgive me. I have no time. I'm in a terrific hurry. I do not want to be an inconvenience, but can you kindly share with me your own experiences with Krsna Prema? I will be meeting with Him very soon."

A devotee should always strive for higher association. We should not just associate only with our peers, but should always try to hear from connections that inspire us, pull us up, remind us of the goal and encourage us.

"Please forgive me. I have no time. I'm in a terrific hurry. I have heard

how Krsna Prema is the dearest friend to everyone. Some say He is the perfect Master, some say He is the sweetest child, still others see Him as the perfect loving companion. I hope to meet with Him very soon. I will tell you my own perception when that glorious day comes."

Once we return to the spiritual kingdom or fully understand our original relationship with the Lord, we will know and serve Him through a particular *rasa*.

"Yes, it is true; I'm in a terrific hurry. I have been so lonely for so long, but very soon I will join with Krsna Prema. The wise say His association takes away all loneliness. Yes, my friend, it is true; I'm in a terrific hurry. For all of my life I have been searching for a deep relationship that is not based on a material foundation. Those who are wise say that a relationship with Krsna Prema is the most profound."

People constantly look for connections and become quite depressed, because they try one relationship after another and never find any real happiness or pleasure.

“Yes, it is true; I’m in a terrific hurry. Always bewildered and frustrated, I am rushing off to meet Krsna. His association is said to give the greatest solace. Fear and depression have accompanied me all my life. I have been told that once one meets Krsna, never again will depression or fear shadow such a fortunate person. Please forgive me, my friend. I am always in a terrific hurry. I may die soon. If I do not meet with Krsna Prema, my life will have been a failure. Please come with me. Let us fully prepare ourselves to receive Him. He is so dear, but rarely makes Himself available. This may be our one and only chance. Let us not take one second for granted.”

Questions & Answers

Question: Sometimes our chanting is so inattentive and our minds are just crazy, which makes it hard to love Krsna in such a state. If we at least keep up the determination and faith, will we have some hope?

Answer: In the neophyte state, the mind constantly harasses us with haunting impressions from the past and picks up stimulation from the immediate environment. To the degree that we identify with the mind, the mind will concomitantly cause many complexi-

ties. However, if we see the mind as different from ourselves, we will be able to look at the mind and say, "Oh, it is just the mind doing its thing." Similarly, at the first point of *bhava*, there will be causes for agitation but we must not allow ourselves to accept or identify with it from the heart. This comes from practice. Although the mind will act in its own way, we must have purified intelligence. We can purify the intelligence through association with the scriptures and association with good examples. Then the intelligence will be able to reflect on and remind itself of the attainable goal with readiness to pay the price. This kind of determination comes from association. If we have quality association and take advantage of it, this association will infect us. Conversely, if we associate with the materialists and imbibe their association, we will be infected by the diseases they carry.

Question: You mentioned earlier that materialists seem to actively try to avoid blessings. Can you elaborate on this point?

Answer: Sometimes we stress that the conditioned soul works overtime to try to deny the simple, the genuine and the sublime. The existence of God is obvious, and the suffering caused by the material body is obvious, but most people do not accept these facts. Therefore, they often use extra endeavor to see the world and act without recognizing Krsna as the supreme proprietor.

Question: Are the *rasas* in the spiritual world similar to the mundane world? For example, a comedian does an act and every time you remember his act, you laugh. Is this similar to Krsna's pastimes? Or, in Krsna's pastimes for example, you picture Mother Yasoda trying to bind baby Krsna but the rope always ends up two inches short. Every time you remember this pastime, you laugh. It is similar?

Answer: It is just like the example you gave of someone telling a joke. Sometimes a person tells a joke and nobody laughs or picks up on its dynamics because they simply cannot tune into the specific culture. In different parts of the world, people joke about different subjects and the jokes of other cultures might not register or seem funny to an American, because they deal with lifestyles and idiosyncratic tendencies. For those who have love of Krsna and who are His unalloyed devotees, everything that Krsna does is fantastic. Of course, certain activities are stimulating in an adventurous way, funny way, and so many other ways. The comedian is a good example because a good comedian will tell different jokes according to the audience. One audience may pick up on political jokes and another group may enjoy other themes. The pure devotees have an inside connection which is not necessarily secretive. For instance, Lord Caitanya and His intimate associates had nighttime *kirtanas* in which the mood of association between the pure devotees differed greatly from the mood of the public. There

was a different language, different level of communication and different sensitivity.

Question: For someone like me who does not know the philosophy, is there any hope for me to become Krsna conscious?

Answer: You could not speak in this way if you were not already somewhat serious. Great devotees also speak in this way. Actually, Srila Prabhupada did not consider himself to be a great scholar and the prayers of the great *acaryas* also reveal their humility. Srila Gaurakisora dasa Babaji was illiterate. Scholarship is not a qualification for making advancement. Knowledge and austerity may help at the initial platform but genuine progress requires deep understanding. As we engage in a proper activity with understanding, the activity has more potency. However, understanding is not based on scholarship, because we can read and hear so much but not really understand. If we really understand something, it will change our lives. If we analyze our own lives, we may find that we cannot understand beyond a certain point because we hear but do not then change our lives. To what degree do we act upon what we hear? Krsna consciousness is not in any way limited by gender, race, part of the world or even any time of creation. It is not limited by wealth, beauty or knowledge. We know that only *bhakti* brings *bhakti*. We have to absorb the mind and intelligence and feed them with this knowledge simply because they

are rascals. If they were not such rascals, we would not have to feed them so much. Even Lord Caitanya emphatically shows this fact, because although he did not write many books, he wanted books written and asked others to write them. He did not write books but He gave us a few very basic things that actually encompass everything. For this reason, Srila Prabhupada explains in the *Bhagavad-gita* that one can become Krsna conscious in many lifetimes or literally in moments. It all depends on how quickly we can accept the facts.

In many cases, if we have intellectual propensities, they must be engaged or they will go towards the many attractions of the material energy. Usually, without proper piety, the intellectual propensity can cause interference because the mind will be more active and able to rationalize materialism. We will consider ourselves to be more important, which will cause the false ego to interfere. However, if we have this propensity and can control it sufficiently, we can make it wonderful by offering it to Krsna. Our intelligence can be used for preaching. But again, it has nothing to do with advancement. For example, it is wonderful that so many speakers come to the temple and give different courses on different topics. But, if one does not act upon the knowledge and give up sense gratification, it becomes another form of enjoyment rather than service. We have to be careful to not want to just enjoy Krsna or the philosophy. We have to hear it, use it and apply it. Otherwise, we will become wonderful philosophers or *panditas* who

are ready to lash at each other with *sastra* while we claim our territory and a material heritage instead of spiritual heritage. Consequently, *aparadhas* can set in. We discussed quite a bit about humility, which goes much deeper than we normally think. Without humility as an ongoing factor in our lives, there will be many obstacles. Even though we can understand a great deal, there will be many obstacles and little ability to work through them. We must always humble ourselves in spite of whatever we have or do not have.

Question: I feel really worthless, particularly as we begin the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses and discuss *bhava*. When I read these verses, I just do not feel it and feel like a phony. I understand that we need to trust in the process, but it feels like a duty to recite them every morning and feel nothing.

Answer: For this reason, we should review our daily activities. At a certain point we do want to learn something new, but it is more important to go deeper into what we already have. Everything is here. In actuality, after just a few days in the association of devotees, we receive most of what is necessary. If we really appreciated the essential, especially these last *slokas*, we would not be conditioned souls. It is not unusual to have no appreciation and to not feel these symptoms. Hearing these last few *slokas* can even make us fearful because the mind and intelligence want to shout out: “No! No! No!”

Once a devotee told Srila Prabhupada that he did not feel humble while prostrating himself and offering obeisances. Srila Prabhupada explained that he should do it anyway and the understanding will come as long as one does not have strong resistance. Sometimes we see two devotees arguing and one suddenly drops and offers obeisances. It just changes the whole atmosphere. If you are angry and shouting at someone but the person says, “*Prabhu*, I’m really sorry.” and offers obeisances, your heart changes and the whole atmosphere changes.

Question: How do we rid ourselves of the more subtle contaminations in the heart?

Answer: This question relates to the third *sloka*. One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street, and being more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige. And the key is to be ready to offer all respects to others. We need to go beyond just self-examination and the endeavor to develop tolerance, humility and submissiveness, by focusing on the active and positive engagements instead of just stopping the negative. When proper humility is established, one is eager to respect, serve and honor others. We do not avoid the service, feel any grudges or simply focus on ourselves. In this way, humility sets in and the subtle contaminations begin to leave. Sometimes devotees can even fake humility but everything still revolves

around them, which means that they cannot really honor a *Vaisnava* or feel love for *Vaisnavas*. They remain stuck in *moksa* consciousness, thinking only in relation to their growth, their understanding, their salvation, their development, etc.

However, this is not the mindset of our eternal home, the spiritual world. The more we try to think and act in the mindset of home, the more we will be prepared to go home. We are in prison now, trying to get paroled. We have begun to hear and think about the activities outside the prison and need to prepare ourselves for that lifestyle. We are endeavoring to make a complete paradigm shift. We no longer want to see through the glasses of the material world but we want to understand the activities and thought processes of those who are free of the disease. Then, as we act like those who are free, we begin to understand and become like them. Otherwise, we can accomplish so much but still maintain the basic old patterns and archetypes of the material energy. If we serve with these old patterns, our service will only endure for a short period. Devotional service is very serious and nothing can remain hidden. When we receive more resources such as money, manpower or opportunities to serve, if we do not become simultaneously more humble, we will get electrocuted. Without strong humility, Krsna will arrange an external situation that will cause an actual physical falldown due to a lack of humility. Krsna does not accept bribes. When you offer something without the right consciousness, it

is like a bribe. It may continue for a while, but after some time, Srimati Radharani will not allow such nonsense. Then someone will fall down because they are already fallen in consciousness. It will just be exposed.

Verse 7

Mood of Separation

I cannot say much about the last two *Siksastaka* verses, which in one sense, is contradictory since these two especially contain the full expression of devotion, *prema*, or pure love of God. These topics are very deep and beyond my level of appreciation, but we will try to investigate some points given by our great predecessors such as Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. Verse seven emphasizes the mood of separation, or *vipralambha*. Verse eight concludes with the full mood of the highest perfection, or we should say it actually begins with that mood, because what Lord Caitanya has given has no end. Verse eight connects us with the great blessing of Lord Caitanya's appearance in this world as the combination of mother-father God and as a combination of Kṛṣṇa and His *hladini* potency. Kṛṣṇa comes to experience His own gift, and He shares it freely with the inhabitants of this world. Caitanya Mahāprabhu distributes and benedicts in the most magnanimous way whether we are qualified or unqualified. Everyone is exposed to the ultimate mood of *Vraja*, which has been brought

down to *martyaloka* or to these hellish environments. Some people may not have any attraction for these higher principles because their own mentality is too captured by materialism, doubts, fears and lower energy.

*yugayitam nimesena
caksusa pravraṣayitam
sūnyayitam jagat sarvaṃ
govinda-virahena me*

“O Govinda! Feeling Your separation, I am considering a moment to be like twelve years or more. Tears are flowing from my eyes like torrents of rain and I am feeling all vacant in the world in Your absence.”

This is the mood of separation experienced by those who have attained the highest goal or for those who are ongoing possessors such as the *nitya-siddhas*. We can approach this in different ways but one way is through an example in our present environment. We had a wonderful visiting *guru* here who only left a few hours ago, but we can already feel some separation. So many wonderful devotees have visited in the past and when they leave, we feel some separation. Sometimes we use secular or mundane examples because we can relate to them. For instance, a drug addict is accustomed to taking drugs everyday. If they cannot access that drug,

their whole life becomes totally disoriented. Their mental and physical aspects become disturbed and their body experiences withdrawal symptoms. They experience anger and tension, and because their life revolves around the drug, without it everything becomes practically useless. Life cannot continue without it. We can also see this mood manifest in lovers who experience the pain of separation even though it is merely "love" in the material world.

The Pain of Separation

The more wonderful something is, the more difficult it becomes to not have it. And if something has become an integral part of our ongoing existence, its absence will cause feelings of nothingness. Its absence will cause us to feel almost dead. Sometimes it even takes people's lives. For instance, maybe a husband and wife have been together for a long time such as 40, 50 or 60 years, but one suddenly dies. Often, the other person will die within months. The mind affects the body in such circumstances and they basically lose the desire to live since such an integral part of them has gone with nothing left to replace it. All of their endeavors simply bring them more frustration. They lived together in the house for 50 years, woke up together every morning, and spent their afternoons and evenings in each other's association. Now he or she is stuck in the house alone and has to do everything alone, which makes their whole life totally miserable. Their whole life experience revolved around the association of the

other person and they based the meaning of their activities on this association. It is as if a certain part of them dies or as if half of the body becomes paralyzed. You try to continue enjoying without the other half of the body or without the use of hands, arms or maybe legs, but you are simply not the same person. You deal with everything differently, in a state of anxiety, frustration and gloom. Although the object of affection was perhaps not very deep in how they would reciprocate with you and how you would reciprocate in return, still the loss is tremendous.

Some people become almost insane and suffer so much when they lose even their cat or dog. They cannot eat or sleep. The drug addict also suffers from this type of reaction. Eating and sleeping mean nothing to them. Or when someone gets their heart broken by their so-called lover, they may lose enthusiasm for their regular activities for weeks, months, years or even for the rest of their life. Everything simply becomes mechanical. They eat but have no taste for the food. They sleep only when they cannot keep the body awake any longer. They have no desire for eating, sleeping or anything else. We have all had these experiences to different degrees. Our reflection on the loss or separation can completely absorb us. The more we accepted the object as an integral part of our lives, the more difficult the separation becomes.

Ultimate Separation

Now imagine the intensity of separation from the

ultimate Lover. It is intense pain and anxiety but, at the same time, it is not. In the pure state, separation does not really exist, because the meditation on Krsna always remains strong even during the so-called separation. A pure entity who thinks of the topmost pureness may seem to experience even more anxiety but it is really more absorption and love. But the intensity is there so we use the example of separation but emphasize the intensity. We realize that the experience is much more intense because the subject or object is much more dynamic. Imagine the intensity experienced by certain entities when they absorb themselves in devastating drugs or in relationships basically based on lust. Then, when they cannot be with their partner in lust, they lose their desire to live. However, we hear these same expressions from these great souls who say that life is meaningless, useless and worthless without the association of Krsna. Feeling this separation seems to turn a short moment or small interval into twelve years or more. "Tears are flowing from my eyes like torrents of rain and I am feeling all vacant in the world in Your absence." We may have felt suicidal at times, wondering about the reasons for living any longer. Due to material anxieties and frustrations, people lose focus and purpose in life. They look at their past, present and future situations and see only more misery and suffering. Consequently, they think, "No, I cannot bear any more. I cannot go on. I want out of this suffering."

Preparing to Return Home

As we previously explained, singing, dancing, dressing, etc. is all ultimately meant for Kṛṣṇa's enjoyment in the association of Kṛṣṇa's devotees in the spiritual world. All of our current endeavors are just the activities of the prisoners or conditioned souls in the prison. As devotees, we are practicing for our real activities in the spiritual world. People are acting, sporting, behaving chivalrously, etc., because these are really the eternal activities in the spiritual world for Kṛṣṇa. For instance, you may take my coat and claim it as your own although it really belongs to me. This false proprietorship of the coat is not grounded. It is illusory because the object really belongs to someone else. Therefore, although you may look at it, use it and claim it, it does not belong to you. We are like thieves. Although we try to steal Kṛṣṇa's property, He just gives us a small replica or toy to prevent us from creating disturbances because there can be no imperfections in the spiritual kingdom. If the mother is cooking and the child is disturbing her, the mother may give the child a small toy cook set and say, "Okay, now you bake a cake, sweetheart." The child may then pretend to bake and become absorbed for a period of time. Cooking is a real activity and the child is imitating this activity. The replica indicates that the real activity actually exists. The artificial reflection exists because the real activity exists, but the real activity is more than we can handle.

The feeling of separation in the material world is

just a replica of the intensity of our connection with Krsna. The difference is that the spiritual intensity and anxiety is an expression of various *bhavas* or ecstasies or even different levels of *prema*. This anxiety stimulates a greater expression of love between the living entity and Krsna. It is slight word jugglery to refer to this expression as painful, for it is not pain as we understand it. It is separation but not separation. Similarly, we can try to explain time in a material sense but then look at time in the spiritual world. Time exists in the spiritual world, but simultaneously there is no time. Krsna has always existed and will always exist. His pastimes are eternal and He always extends His love. It is not that His love started at some point and will ever stop. It will always remain. However, we talk about the different activities that happen at intervals or at different periods of the day. The physical body and senses are limited to only one realm of experience but the soul is not limited. One sense of the eternal soul can perform all the functions of the other senses. From this reflection, we can understand that expressions and activities do take place in the spiritual realm but the experiences are completely different. The senses of the physical body are very limited and only tuned into the experience of each particular sense. There are no barriers limiting the spiritual body and the soul is part and parcel of the Lord.

In one sense, there is really nothing more than Krsna interacting with Himself, meaning that the living entities are just part and parcel of Krsna.

Therefore, everything is possible and everything is perfectly arranged. Although we are in the material world, we are still part and parcel of Krsna but are experiencing some static due to our rebelliousness. In the spiritual kingdom, there is no static and everything is simultaneously possible. So Krsna explains that, when he hides Himself, He is really making an arrangement to increase the love of His servants. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura shares a few points in this regard. Previously, we discussed *bhava* in *sloka* six. When this *bhava-bhakti* becomes steady and permanent, it turns into *sthayi-bhava* and then it grades into *prema*. In *slokas* seven and eight, we will discuss the *prema* that emerges from the *bhava*. Srila Rupa Gosvami states in his *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.4.1:

“Bhava-bhakti which, from its very first stages, so excessively affects the heart that it melts and becomes a sublime salve of love, bringing the highest feelings of divine bliss within reach, and generates an intense desire for Krsna. The fully perfected souls term this over-vaulting ecstasy as prema.”

The word *mamata* refers to the sense of possessiveness that occurs when one thinks of Krsna as one's master, friend, son or lover.

“When anuraga is filled with unsurpassable and matchless magnificence of love, reaching the plateau of madness, it becomes maha-bhava. In this stage, even the blinking of an eyelid veiling the view of the beloved for less than a moment, becomes intolerable, and seconds stretch to eons. Separation for even a moment seems to expand to timeless eternity.”

Sri Siksastaka, 62

Of course, this is the expression of *mahabhava*. How can one feel *vipralambha* or love in separation when one has not met Krsna? We can understand the concept of *vipralambha* in the spiritual world because one is sometimes with Krsna and sometimes not with Him. However, if one has never met Krsna, how can one experience this emotion? For instance, before Krsna’s arrival in Mathura, the ladies of the city felt such separation from Him although they never even met Him. Rukmini also never actually met Krsna but felt the intense pains of separation in a mood similar to the mood of the residents of *Vraja*. How was it possible for her to feel such emotions? The answer is simply by hearing about Krsna. From this, such emotions arise in the heart.

Types of Separation

There are ten different types of *vipralambha*, or separation. In English, the first is called anxiousness. The second is insomnia. Many of us may have had this experience after something intense happened in our lives and we could not eat or sleep for several days. If you have not experienced such, you are very unfortunate. Sometimes the intense anxiety gives us amazing realizations. This kind of clearing can be very healthy and can help us gain more insights. In literature, there is a similar conception of the tragic hero. The hero learns extensively from his different adventures, anxieties and sufferings that lead him to become a greater or more aware person. The third type is agitation. Number four is emaciation of the body. Number five is discoloration of the limbs of the body. Number six is incoherent speech. Number seven is being attacked with a chronic ailment. Eight is madness, nine is bewilderment and ten is giving up the body.

Even mundane psychologists and psychiatrists are now introducing the conception that madness in certain people may result from a spiritual emergency or a spiritual crisis. There is a whole science in relation to this conception. As we try to deal with this material world and pursue spiritual understanding, it causes trauma and incoherence as a result of the shedding. If we do not receive guidance through certain challenges, it can lead to what the materialists label as a mental breakdown. Actually, it can be a stage of development and unfoldment that

sets a platform to move on to a higher phase. The expressions of *vipralambha* compare to madness because one will be insensitive to certain things and very sensitive to other things. A person experiencing these symptoms would seem very abnormal. Those psychiatrists who have been involved in spiritual disciplines can understand what happens when certain *chakras* open, when someone receives certain realizations, or when an overwhelming experience cannot easily be processed into the consciousness. A person in this condition may appear to be mad. They may tune out the regular experiences, develop tremendous greed for spiritual understanding, and develop disgust for certain day to day activities that people accept as important.

Several issues are becoming very strange to 'normal' therapists. In this period of world history and in this aspect of *Kali-yuga*, there are many unusual situations and occurrences. Ultimately, they are all to help people develop a greater appreciation and understanding of the human condition, the mind, intelligence and the soul. The tenth type of separation is unconsciousness and death. When someone experiences these anxieties due to the death of another, drugs or maybe the loss of a job, they can become manic-depressive. Some people even experience manic depression just from losing their jobs. It simply overwhelms them. Their whole life revolved around a certain arrangement, and due to an abrupt change, they simply cannot cope. However, these are all just reflections of the real

experience in the same way that the child plays with the toy kitchen set. The perverted reflection exists simply because the reality exists. In conclusion to this seventh *sloka*, Lord Caitanya says in the *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, *Antya-līlā* 20.40-41:

“In My agitation, a day never ends, for every moment seems like a millennium. Pouring incessant tears, My eyes are like clouds in the rainy season. The three worlds have become void because of separation from Govinda. I feel as if I were burning alive in a slow fire.”

Verse 8

My Worshipful Lord, Unconditionally

The last verse, *sloka* number eight, deals with obtaining the highest perfection of one's cherished goal or *prajojana*. This last verse concludes the *Siksastaka* prayers and gives a last reflection to meditate upon. The expression is profound and opposes all patterns of material consciousness. It is the complete, diametrical opposite of material consciousness. Even as devotees, when we read this, it sends chills down our spines.

*aslisya va pada-ratam pinastu mam
adarsanan marma-hatam karotu va
yatha tatha va vidadhatu lampato
mat-prana-nathas tu sa eva naparah*

*"I know no one but Krsna as my
Lord and He shall remain so even
if He handles me roughly by His
embrace or makes me brokenhearted
by not being present before me. He
is completely free to do anything*

*and everything, for He is always my
worshipful Lord, unconditionally.”*

This verse makes some people want to run out of the temple. “Hold on a minute! I joined the wrong movement! I thought I was joining this movement in order to get all of my desires and aspirations fulfilled. God is love and He is supposed to make me happy. Therefore, I will pray and call on His name so that He will quickly and expediently fulfill my desires!” Here Krsna fully explains how to attain Him. He Himself receives this ultimate love unconditionally and ceaselessly and speaks in this way. “You can handle me roughly, You can make me brokenhearted or You can even decide not to be present, which is all right because You are free to do anything and everything. Always You shall remain my worshipable Lord.” Krsna says in *Bhagavad-gita* 18.66 to abandon all varieties of religion:

*sarva-dharman parityajya
mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo
moksaisyami ma sucah*

He gives Arjuna all kinds of instruction but then emphasizes that one should abandon all varieties of religiosity. He tells him to abandon the pursuit of Brahman, of *varnasrama-dharma* and even of all religiosity. He says, “Do not worry and do not hesitate. I shall protect you.” Krsna asks the living entities

to make themselves fully available and categorically states that He will do His part as we do our part.

In this prayer, given by Lord Caitanya in the mood of the *gopis*, the only concern is the pleasure and happiness of Krsna. Material sociologists and psychologists will categorize this as some kind of tremendous mental problem. They might view such expressions as almost masochistic since the *gopis* say, "Do as You like but you will always be mine, even if You give me distress. Such distress will be my greatest source of happiness if it makes You happy and pleases You." For this reason, we explain that Krsna consciousness is transcendental since it has nothing to do with the material mindsets of "I" and "mine." It has nothing to do with any pleasure separate from the ultimate source of pleasure, Krsna. Therefore, Krsna consciousness is in disguise because it is really about attaining the highest sense gratification, which far surpasses the dull and limited senses. We are not referring to the temporary physical bodies that always harass and disappoint us. We are not referring to relationships with so-called lovers who ultimately disappoint us or cannot understand us. We are also not speaking of relationships that leave us hoping for an improvement or a deeper connection or relationships in which each partner has their own secrets and cannot fully connect. Krsna does not ask for anything that He does not already have. He simply asks us to give up the false illusion of proprietorship that causes our suffering. Everything follows His path and resides under His

control but we think differently; therefore, we have to suffer. Due to our materialistic mentality, the word 'surrender' in our English language carries a connotation of defeat caused by a stronger power who forces the weaker party to surrender. One has to surrender since they have been overpowered and have no other choice. When we view surrender as a commitment to an insecure or hostile situation, the mindset will accompany us. However, if we consider ourselves to be in danger, in pain, lost or suffering and surrender in this mood, the act of surrender compares to a small child who runs and surrenders into the arms of the mother or father in order to receive love and protection. Actually, surrender is literally falling back in love with the Lord in the land of love and coming to the embrace of the Lord. In this sense, surrender has an entirely different connotation. It no longer refers to the grudging situation of being overpowered and thinking, "Now we have to act against our will due to their force and will now lose our individuality and identity." No, it is the opposite because we actually reclaim our real identity in our eternal associations with the Lord.

This last verse expresses how to once again experience this reality in its totality. This expression reveals the mind and consciousness of those who are already having the experience. If we want to acquire something, we should follow the example of those who already have it in order to obtain the same result. Lord Caitanya speaks as the perfect devotee in the mood of Srimati Radharani and in

the mood of the damsels of Vraja, who have His love fully in this particular mood. They only think about Krsna's care and love and, because they are all for Him, He is all for them. In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 11.29.34, Krsna says:

"When the mortal beings decide to relinquish all fruitive activities and their results, and fully surrender unto Me, I reciprocate by giving them the nectar of immortality, elevating them to become My eternal associates."

All for Krsna

Lord Krsna Himself says in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 10.32.22:

"My dear gopis, you have severed all family bindings for My sake. Such an achievement is very rare, even for great philosophers and yogis. Our meetings with each other are completely pure and unblemished. If I wanted to repay the debt that I have incurred by your love, devotion, service and renunciation, even with My immortal body for all eternity, I would be unable. I am obligated to you life after life. You may succeed in acquitting Me of this debt by your gentle and divine demeanor—nay,

your sublime love; but I will always remain indebted to you."

Here we see the intensity. They are all for Krsna and Krsna is all for them. He claims that He cannot repay them. Even if they somehow write off His debt, He still feels indebted to them. Sri Krsna says in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 10.32.21:

"O beloved gopis, there is no doubt that for My sake you have disregarded social taboos, Vedic injunctions, even cut yourselves off from your relatives and family members. Your meditation on Me has been single-minded, not thinking at all of your beauty or your nuptial bliss. In order to increase your love for Me I disappeared from your sight. Please do not blame Me for this act of love, because you are as dear to Me as I am to you."

Krsna explains that He purposely makes Himself unavailable in order to enhance the love that He allows them to experience and to increase His own experience of love for them. We find further elaboration in the *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, *Antya-līlā* 20.48-52:

"I am a maidservant at the lotus feet of Krsna. He is the embodiment

of transcendental happiness and mellows. If He likes, He can embrace Me tightly and make Me feel one with Him, or He may corrode My mind and body by not giving Me His audience. Nevertheless, He alone is the Lord of My life. My dear friend, just hear the decision of My heart. Krsna is the Lord of My life in all conditions, whether He shows Me affection or kills Me by making Me unhappy.

"Sometimes Krsna gives up the company of the other gopis and becomes controlled, mind and body, by Me. Thus He manifests My good fortune and gives others distress by performing His loving affairs with Me. After all, since He is a cunning and obstinate debauchee with a propensity to cheat, He takes to the company of other women. He indulges in loving affairs with them in front of Me just to give distress to My mind. Nevertheless, He is still the Lord of My life. I do not mind My personal distress, I only wish for the happiness of Krsna, for His happiness is the goal of My life. However, if He feels great happiness by giving Me distress, that distress is the best of My happiness."

As previously described, it is separation and yet not separation because they always think of the Lord. The more one thinks of spiritual realities, the more one associates with them since it is all the same. Materially there is time separation and geographical separation, but spiritually there is no separation. For instance, in the spiritual world there are no demons but only the sentiments of their presence. The idea of demons enhances the devotion. Radharani seemingly has a so-called husband, Abhimanyu, who is also meant to enhance the adventure and loving expressions. When we take all of these realities and put them in the material world, we have a little girl playing with her pretend cook set, which is not real but exists because the reality exists. Therefore, our feelings of separation from material objects or relationships exist only because of the existence of the real spiritual emotions. When one thinks about the intensity of Krsna's love, which is separation but not separation, it makes one want to always experience Krsna's association. So the pure servants of Krsna are always eager for the next meeting with Krsna, knowing that His love and theirs will continue to increase and unfold. Krsna wants to give more, and the living entities will simultaneously experience more, as they give more to Krsna. There is an ongoing competition and each moment becomes more intense. The material world is exactly the opposite. At every moment, something is deteriorating until eventually it can no longer function. In the spiritual sense, Krsna's own pastimes are always

unfolding to such an extent that even *Ananta-sesa* cannot keep up with all of His pastimes. Even Krsna cannot keep up with Himself due to the constant unfoldment. This material world is the realm of disappointments, constant anxieties, constant anticipation and frustration. On the other hand, the spiritual world is an environment of constant adventure, constant exploration and constant loving competition in which every second turns into a higher experience of Krsna's love.

Questions & Answers

Question: During this interim state between the theoretical and the actual realization, how can we best fix our consciousness without becoming impatient and thinking, "Okay, Krsna, when will it come?"

Answer: The earlier *sloka*s addressed these points. For example, the first verse dealt with the importance of the congregational chanting of the Lord's holy name. The second one addressed the awareness of one's incompetence to chant the holy name. Although the name can bring everything, the living entities are so unlucky or unfortunate that they remain unwilling or unable to utilize it properly. In *sloka* number three, Lord Caitanya gives us the process to become fortunate and the key that opens the door. *Sloka* four deals with the elimination of unfavorable desires and He even spells several of them out for us: no desire for wealth, no desire for

beautiful women and no desire for many followers. He only wants His causeless devotional service. He is showing us some of the *anarthas*, or dust, that covers the mirror and causes us to not see or understand. Number five gives us knowledge about the *jiva's* original spiritual identity so that we can focus on our real situation as servitors who have fallen. The sixth *sloka* describes the experience of one who has received the good fortune and come close to the Lord. The seventh *sloka* shows the mood of separation experienced by those who have come to this topmost platform. The eighth *sloka* discusses the process of attaining the highest perfection or ultimate goal. We want to know what is genuine and what is artificial. We want to know what is proper and what is not. So the Lord describes some of the expressions of a genuine soul. Everything begins from this point of taking the chanting of the holy name more seriously. It goes beyond the idea of putting your hand on the beads and uttering with the mouth, but we must also consider the ten offenses when we chant our rounds.

Question: In relation to the eighth verse, it seems inconceivable to think that anyone in their right mind would say that you are free to do anything and everything but will always remain my worshipable Lord unconditionally. In the back of my mind, I know that Krsna is God and He will reciprocate, but when I read this verse, I do not really mean it.

Answer: We do not mean it because we do not trust Krsna or believe Him. When you trust someone and feel that they care about you even more than you care for yourself, this understanding will dispel the fear. We will eagerly want to connect with that which is so wonderful. However, due to our anger, fear and envy of Krsna, such submissions sound very intense. Of course, these feelings are the reason for our position here in the material world in material bodies.

If someone holds a gun to our head and demands that we surrender to them, we will not be so eager or happy about the situation. However, if a small child sees the mother and father standing with open arms, then the child runs into the embrace of the parent. The child surrenders to that situation. When there is understanding of the love and receiving of the love, there will also be eagerness. The child literally runs to the parents. So-called lovers will also run to each other in this way, considering the beloved to be connected with many wonderful associations. However, the exact opposite occurs when one is afraid of a person who has been abusive or who they feel can hurt them. Our fear of Krsna, lack of trust, and our envy will lead to procrastination. Material life is a form of craziness so we find many ways to avoid being loved and embraced by the Lord. We run to so many material amenities, which eventually cause us pain. We may do this for many lifetimes until we finally become exhausted. Then the consciousness from previous lives follows us and in our present life they will no longer attract

us because we have already tried everything and have instead developed stronger faith. We may have engaged in some *bhakti*, which carries over so that we lose the taste for the material.

Question: Sometimes people will have desperation for God and cry for Him but lose this feeling of separation when they come to our movement. Now they sort of “have” Him. Could this mean that they were more advanced in the beginning?

Answer: Just go to a mosque, church or synagogue and take an inventory of their prayers by asking, “What are you praying for?” They would tell you, “My uncle, my cousin, my niece, my daughter, my job, etc.” They might even be crying in anxiety over these material considerations because of the blocks preventing their enjoyment or experience. It would be hard to find someone crying and praying, “My dear Lord, Thy will be done.” Actually, they are really crying out of material frustration. Something has interfered with their sense gratification and material life so they approach the Lord in material frustration due to disappointment or depression. They are not crying, “Oh Lord you are so wonderful. Do with me as You like.” However, the Bible, Koran and Torah all emphasize the idea of “Thy will be done.” These hidden, higher truths are there but they do not really take it that seriously. For instance, we fast and the materialists and pseudo-spiritualists also fast, but they fast in a different mood. They want God to take

notice of them and want to force Him to fulfill their desires quickly because after all, they are fasting for Him; therefore, they feel that He should do something for them. Do you think that they fast and pray, "Oh dear Lord, You can make me broken-hearted, You can appear or not appear, for the rest of my life, I am Yours?" No way. Even devotees rarely pray in this mood. Srila Prabhupada said that many devotees will end up in the heavenly kingdom because the quality of their devotion is still based on proprietorship and certain material enjoyments. It is still based on only somewhat wanting Krsna but not fully. The demigods also somewhat have Krsna. Some of them talk to Him, receive orders from Him and even carry them out, but they still have their space, their sovereign area, their jurisdiction and their power of attorney. Krsna is so kind that He accommodates them but as they increasingly desire a change of consciousness, He will also fulfill that desire.

If we think of God as an autocrat and especially if we have certain issues with authority in the material world, this will make it more difficult to surrender. Actually Krsna really surrenders to us in the sense that He even became Arjuna's chariot driver. He even washed the feet of all the guests at the *Rajasuya* ceremony. Krsna actually cried when He thought of the Pandava's austerities and difficulties that they accepted on His behalf. It is really a craziness to have so much fear of Krsna and for so many lifetimes to constantly find many other arms to take shelter of instead of Krsna's arms.

For endless lifetimes, we looked for many beautiful situations, nice connections and nice associations although Krsna is there. In order to assist us in our crazy state, Krsna appears in the *arca-vigraha*, the Deity form, so that we can dress Him, gaze upon His form, feed Him, put Him to rest and wake Him up. These activities will help us out of this craziness of remaining separate. Instead of playing with toys, we are preparing and maturing for His association in the place where everything is about Him. For those of you who perform Deity worship, you can see that so much of your life revolves around the Deity. Due to the service, you might not be able to leave, you have to wake up at a certain time to wake the Deities, or you have to change your dhoti or sari. You may have to shorten a conversation because it is almost time for the *arati*. All of these engagements will allow one to gradually become fully Krsna conscious. The difficulty arises because we serve with our limited material body and crazy mind, but in spite of the obstacles, we can gradually offer everything to Krsna. Even for those who are not directly involved in the *pujari* service, so much still happens in relation to the Lord. This community is Krsna conscious because of the presence of the Deities. Due to Their presence, we are hearing about the Lord, chanting His names, honoring *prasadam*, etc. There are so many farms around Gita Nagari with pious families but no Deity, no Krsna. This one important aspect of Krsna consciousness shows our difference from pseudo-religions. We have philosophy, rituals and

ceremonies that go on in all types of religious organizations, but these groups all over the world do not have the installed Deities. The Deity makes a special aspect of communication to the spiritual world available. We should always think more and more about how to please the Deity through our type of association, the type of community or the type of environment. In this way, we will begin to think of everything as being all for Krsna. Then Krsna will think all for us and this same Supreme Personality of Godhead, who owns and controls everything, will say that your love is so strong that He cannot even repay you. He will be eternally indebted to you. It is wonderful to have a rich man indebted to you. He has numerous assets and, due to your connection with him, you have a good situation for the rest of your life. Imagine Krsna, who owns everything, saying, "I have you in my book. I am indebted to you. You own Me. You are Mine and I am yours eternally, beloved."

Conclusion

Krsna comes into this hellish place in the form of Caitanya Mahaprabhu to experience what He Himself gives. Keep in mind that as He gives, He competes but always wins. Since He always wins, He wants to experience the love that He gives. For this reason, He comes as Caitanya Mahaprabhu to understand what Radharani is experiencing, which is even greater than what He is experiencing from Her. In this utmost experience, He gave us these *Siksastaka* prayers. If we can somehow catch up with these prayers and understand them, we will have nothing left to know, because these eight prayers contain all aspects of Krsna consciousness and the spiritual kingdom. It includes the total expression of receiving Krsna's love and the mood of those who have caught up with such. We are trying to come up to this level and, since Lord Caitanya has made these prayers available, we should meditate more on their meaning in order to absorb them more deeply into the heart.

As we have stated in the beginning of this book, considering that Lord Caitanya has recently left, we can reflect on the significance of our presence on this planet at this particular time. As we deeply access all the amazing literatures, stories and

understandings available, we can begin to realize the powerful treasure contained within these eight verses. We should recognize this valuable key that can open sacred doors to the spiritual world. As we recite these *slokas* daily, we should constantly endeavor to enter more deeply into their meaning and mystery. This *Siksastaka* states the conclusion of Krsna Consciousness and offers the culmination of all the Vedas; therefore, it is the necklace that all *Vaisnavas* should wear. A necklace worn around the neck practically touches the heart. These verses are essential for us and should always be kept close to our hearts.

Glossary

Abhidheya: The regulated activities of the soul for reviving his relationship with the Lord; devotional service.

Acarya: A spiritual master who teaches by his own example, and who sets the proper religious example for all human beings.

Adhibhautika: Misery caused by other living beings.

Adhidaivika: Misery or natural disturbances caused by the demigods.

Adhyatmika: Miseries arising from one's own body and mind.

Adi-purusa: The Supreme Lord, Krsna, the original person.

Ahaituki bhakti: Unmotivated devotional service.

Aham mameti: The false conception of "I and mine".

Ahankara: False ego, by which the soul misidentifies with the material body.

Aisvarya: The Lord's majestic, opulent aspect.

Anarthas: Unwanted material desires in the heart that pollute one's consciousness, such as pride, hate, envy, lust, greed, anger and desires for distinction, adoration, wealth, etc.

Angas: Limbs or branches.

Antaranga: The internal, spiritual potency of the Supreme Lord.

Anubhava: Bodily symptoms manifested by a devotee in ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa.

Anyabhilasa: Desires separate than those directed toward serving Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Anyabhilasita sunyam: Free from all material aspirations for the results of fruitive activities or empiric philosophical speculation.

Aparadha: An offense.

Arati: A traditional Vedic ceremony during which nice offerings of incense, ghee lamp, flower, etc. are offered to the Deity of the Lord.

Arcana: The procedures followed for worshiping the *arca-vidyā*, the Deity in the temple; engaging all the senses in the service of the Lord.

Arca-vidyā: An authorized form of God manifested through material elements, as in a painting or statue of Kṛṣṇa worshiped in a temple or home. Actually present in this form, the Lord accepts worship from His devotees.

Artha: Economic development.

Asanas: A sitting posture in *yoga* practice.

Astaka: Eight.

Atma: The self (refers sometimes to the body, sometimes to the soul, and sometimes to the senses).

Atma-nivedana: The devotional process of surrendering everything to the Lord.

Atma-vidyā: Knowledge of the true self or the spirit soul.

Avatara: Literally means 'one who descends.' A partially or fully empowered incarnation of the

Lord who descends from the spiritual sky to the material universe for a particular mission.

Baddha-jiva: The conditioned soul.

Bahiranga: The external, material potency of the Supreme Lord.

Bhajana: Intimate devotional service; chanting devotional songs in a small group, usually accompanied by musical instruments; solitary chanting.

Bhakta: A devotee of the Lord; one who performs devotional service (*bhakti*).

Bhakti: Devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhakti-yoga: The system of cultivation of *bhakti*, or pure devotional service, which is untinged by sense gratification or philosophical speculation.

Bhava: The stage of transcendental love experienced after transcendental affection; manifestation of ecstatic symptoms in the body of a devotee.

Bhava-bhakti: Rendering spontaneous service, which is superior to regulative devotional service.

Bhukti: Material enjoyment.

Brahmacari: Celibate, student life.

Brahmana: A member of the most intelligent class of men, according to the four Vedic occupational divisions of society.

Cakras: Centers of energy located on various parts of the body.

Chadar: Cotton or wool cloth worn on the upper half of the body, also worn by temple priests during worship.

Cintamani: A spiritual mystically potent gemstone

("touchstone"), found in the transcendental realm.

It fulfills all the desires of one who possesses it.

Darsana: The act of seeing or being seen by the Deity in the temple or by a spiritual advanced person.

Dasya: The devotional process of rendering service to the Lord.

Dhama: A holy place.

Dhama-aparadha: An offense against the holy places.

Dharma: Religious principles; one's natural occupation.

Durdaivam: Misfortune.

Gayatri: A sacred *mantra* that a *brahmana* chants silently three times a day at sunrise, noon and sunset to attain the transcendental platform; the Vedic *mantra* that delivers one from material entanglement.

Gopas: Cowherd boys.

Gopis: Cowherd girls.

Gramya-katha: Literally means 'village talk'. Refers to unnecessary and superfluous discussions about worldly matters.

Guru: Spiritual master.

Guru-aparadha: An offense against the spiritual master.

Harinama: The holy name of the Lord.

Harinama-sankirtana: Congregational chanting of the holy names of the Supreme Lord.

Hladini: Krsna's pleasure potency.

Jagat-guru: Spiritual master of the whole world.

Japa: Chanting the holy names quietly to oneself, counting the repetitions of the *maha-mantra* on a *japa-mala*.

Jiva: A spirit soul.

Jnana: The path of empirical knowledge, culminating in attainment of impersonal liberation (*sayujya-mukti*).

Jnana-yoga: The path of spiritual realization through a speculative philosophical search for truth.

Jnani: One adhering to the path of *jnana-yoga*.

Kaitava: Cheating or deceitful.

Kala: Time.

Kali-yuga: The age of quarrel and hypocrisy, which began five thousand years ago and lasts a total of 432,000 years.

Kama: Lust.

Karmi: One engaged in *karma* (fruitive activity); a materialist.

Karatalas: Brass hand cymbals.

Kirtana: Chanting of the Lord's holy names.

Krsna-prema: Pure love of Krsna, the object of the path of *krsna-bhakti*.

Krodha: Anger.

Ksanti: Peaceful.

Laksmi: The goddess of fortune and the eternal consort of the Supreme Lord as Lord Narayana; a term devotees use to denote money.

Lila: Pastimes.

Madhurya: Literally means 'sweetness'. Refers to the sweet conjugal pastimes of Krsna and the *gopis*.

Maha: Big or great.

Mahabhava: The highest expression of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa, possible only in Srimatī Rādhārāṇī.

Maha-mantra: The great chant for deliverance: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

Mahat-tattva: The total material energy.

Maha-visnu: The expansion of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu reclining on Ādi-Śeṣa, from whom all material universes emanate.

Mandira: Temple.

Mangala-arati: The first Deity worship of the day, performed an hour and a half before sunrise.

Manjaris: The young female assistants of the *sakhis* or girlfriends of Srimatī Rādhārāṇī, all between the ages of 6-9 years.

Martyaloka: Literally means ‘world of death’. The earth.

Matsara: Extreme enviousness.

Maya: The external energy of the Supreme Lord, which covers the conditioned soul and does not allow him to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Mayavadis: Any person who thinks that the name and form of the Supreme Lord are made of *maya*, or material energy; ultimately, *mayavadis* want to merge into the impersonal *brahman* (*sayujya-mukti*), thereby committing spiritual suicide.

Mlecchas: A meat-eater; one who is ignorant of Vedic etiquette and cleanliness.

Moksa: Liberation from material bondage.

Mukti: Liberation from material existence.

Nama: The pure holy name of the Lord.

Nama-aparadha: An offense against the holy name of the Lord.

Namabhasa: Chanting on the clearing stage.

Nama-tattva: The truth or conclusions about the holy name of the Lord.

Nirvana: Freedom from material existence.

Nitya-siddha: An eternal associate of the Lord who was never conditioned.

Pada-sevanam: Service to the lotus feet of the Lord; one of the nine principal limbs of devotional service.

Panca-tattva: The Lord, His plenary portion, His incarnation, His energy and His devotee; Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu, Advaita Prabhu, Gadadhara Prabhu and Srivasa Thakura.

Pandita: A learned Vedic scholar whose knowledge is based on scripture.

Parampara: The disciplic succession system of spiritual knowledge beginning with the Lord Himself, and continuing down to the present day.

Prabhu: Master.

Prana: Life air.

Prananatha: Literally means 'Lord and Master of my life'.

Prasadam: Sanctified food; food offered in devotion to Lord Krsna.

Prayascitta: Atonement.

Prayojana: Literally means 'necessity'. The ultimate goal of life; love of Godhead.

Prema: Love; pure and unbreakable love of God;

the stage after *bhava (rati)*, where the soul has attained both self-realization and God realization.

Prema-bhakti: Spontaneous and unalloyed love; the highest transcendental ecstasy attainable by the *jiva*.

Puja: Worship, usually in the form of making offerings to the Deity of the Lord.

Pujari: A priest, specifically one engaged in temple Deity worship.

Raganuga-bhakti: Spontaneous devotional service born out of an intense attraction for the activities of the residents of Vraja.

Rama bhakta: A devotee of Lord Ramacandra (an incarnation of Lord Krsna).

Rasa: The transcendental 'taste' of a particular spiritual relationship with the Supreme Lord.

Rasa-tattva: The teachings of Lord Caitanya on the principles of transcendental mellows as instructed by Srila Rupa Goswami.

Ruci: Liking, taste; the stage after *nistha*, when a strong taste for devotional service arises in the devotee.

Sadhana: Systematic practices aimed at spiritual perfection, especially Deity worship and chanting the holy name of the Lord.

Sadhana-bhakti: There are nine limbs to the practice of *sadhana-bhakti*: hearing, chanting, remembering, serving, Deity worship, offering everything, friendship and surrendering everything.

Sadhaka: One who practices regulated devotional service.

Sadhu: Saintly person.

Sadhu-sanga: Association with *sadhus*.

Sahajiyas: A class of so-called devotees who, considering God cheap, ignore the scriptural injunctions and try to imitate the Lord's pastimes.

Sakhya: The spiritual mellow of friendship; one of the nine principle limbs of devotional service.

Sambandha: The transcendental sentiment of relationship.

Sambandha-jnana: Knowledge of the correct understanding of the relationship between God, His energies, and the living entity.

Sankirtana: The congregational chanting of the holy name, fame, and pastimes of the Lord; preaching.

Sannyasa: The renounced order of life for spiritual culture.

Sannyasi: A person in the renounced order.

Sastra: Revealed scripture; Vedic literature.

Sastric: In relation to or coming from the *sastra*.

Sac-cid-ananda: Eternal, full of knowledge and full of bliss

Sac-cid-ananda-vigraha: The Lord's transcendental form, which is eternal and full of knowledge and bliss.

Seva-aparadha: Offenses in devotional service.

Sakti: Spiritual energy.

Saktiman: The energetic source, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Siddhis: Mystic powers achievable by practice of *yoga*.

Siksa: Transcendental instructions received from the *guru* through the *parampara*.

Siksastaka: Eight verses by Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu glorifying the chanting of the Lord's holy name.

Sloka: A Sanskrit verse.

Smaranam: Devotional remembrance (of Lord Krsna); one of the nine basic forms of *bhakti-yoga*.

Sravanam: Hearing about the Lord; one of the nine basic forms of devotional service.

Sri krsna-nama: The transcendental holy name of Krsna.

Sthayi-bhava: A state of perfection consisting of permanent emotion.

Suddha-bhakta: A pure devotee.

Suddha-bhakti: Pure, unconditional, unmotivated devotional service.

Suddha-svarupa: The living entity's pure, spiritual form.

Svarupa: The living entity's original eternal relationship of service to the Lord, the real form of the soul.

Tamo-guna: The material mode of ignorance.

Tapasvis: Persons who undergo severe penances for elevation to higher planets.

Tapasya: Austerity; voluntary acceptance of some material trouble for progress in spiritual life.

Tatastha: The marginal potency of the Supreme Lord.

Vaidhi-bhakti: Following the principles of regulated devotional service by the order of the spiritual master or according to the injunctions of revealed scriptures.

Vaisnava: A devotee of Lord Visnu, Krsna.

Vaisnava-aparadha: An offense against a devotee of the Lord.

Vandanam: The devotional process of offering prayers to the Lord.

Varnasrama-dharma: The Vedic social system, which organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varnas* and *asramas*).

Vipralambha: The mood of separation experienced in the conjugal mellow, which is seemingly painful and sad, but actually full of exhilaration.

Vrajavasis: The residents of Vrndavana.

Yajna: Sacrifice.

Yoga: Spiritual discipline to link oneself with the Supreme.

Yogi: A practitioner of *yoga*.

Yuga-dharma: The religious process recommended for a particular age.

About The Author



Bhakti Tirtha Swami was born John E. Favors in a pious, God-fearing family. As a child evangelist, he appeared regularly on television, and as a young man, he was a leader in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s civil rights movement. At Princeton University, he became president of the student council and also served as chairman of the Third World Coalition. Although his main degree is in psychology, he has received accolades in many other fields, including politics, African studies, and international law.

Bhakti Tirtha Swami's books are used as reference texts in universities and leadership organizations throughout the world. Many of his books have been printed in English, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Macedonian, Croatian, Russian, Hebrew, Slovenian, Balinese, and Italian.

His Holiness has served as Assistant Coordinator for penal reform programs in the State of New Jersey, Office of the Public Defender, and as a director of several drug abuse clinics in the United States. In addition, he has been a special consultant for Educational Testing Services in the U.S.A. and has managed campaigns for politicians. Bhakti Tirtha Swami gained international recognition as a representative of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, particularly for his outstanding work with scholars in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe.

Bhakti Tirtha Swami directly oversaw projects in the United States (particularly Washington D.C., Potomac, Maryland, Detroit, Pennsylvania, West Virginia), West Africa, South Africa, Switzerland, France, Croatia, and Bosnia. He also served as the director of the American Federation of Vaisnava Colleges and Schools.

In the United States, Bhakti Tirtha Swami was the founder and director of the Institute for Applied Spiritual Technology, director of the International Committee for Urban Spiritual Development, and one of the international coordinators of the Seventh Pan African Congress. Reflecting his wide range of interests, he was also a member of the Institute for Noetic Sciences, the Center for Defense Information, the United Nations Association for America, the National Peace Institute Foundation, the World Future Society, and the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders.

A specialist in international relations and conflict resolution, Bhakti Tirtha Swami constantly traveled around the world and had become a spiritual consultant to many high-ranking members of the United Nations, to various celebrities, and to several chiefs, kings, and high court justices. In 1990 His Holiness was coronated as a high chief in Warri, Nigeria in recognition for his outstanding work in Africa and the world. In recent years, he met several times with then-President Nelson Mandela of South Africa to share visions and strategies for world peace.

In addition to encouraging self-sufficiency through the development of schools, clinics, farm projects, and cottage industries, Bhakti Tirtha Swami conducted seminars and workshops on principle-centered leadership, spiritual development, interpersonal relationships, stress and time management, and other pertinent topics. He was also widely acknowledged as a viable participant in the resolution of global conflict.

On August 5, 2004, Bhakti Tirtha Swami was diagnosed with melanoma cancer in his left foot. Although he made

every effort to treat his condition, the cancer continued to spread, leading His Holiness' to teach the most important lesson—how to die. During the time after his diagnosis, he gave numerous lectures on the topic and completed a book of meditations, *The Beggar IV: Die Before Dying*, also dedicated to this same topic. Almost a year later, on June 27, 2005, His Holiness departed from this world, surrounded by loving friends, relatives, and disciples.

Although His Holiness Bhakti Tirtha Swami has seemingly gone, he actually left behind him a powerful legacy that will continue to live on through his students and well-wishers, and especially through his books. Numerous lectures, seminars, and workshops wait in the archives for Hari-Nama Press to transcribe and to then publish in future books. B.T. Swami's teachings will undoubtedly continue through these unique books and through the lives of those who imbibe his message.