

SERVICE LIFE



Reflections, Reminders and Guidelines of
Vaiṣṇava Standards, Behaviour and Etiquette

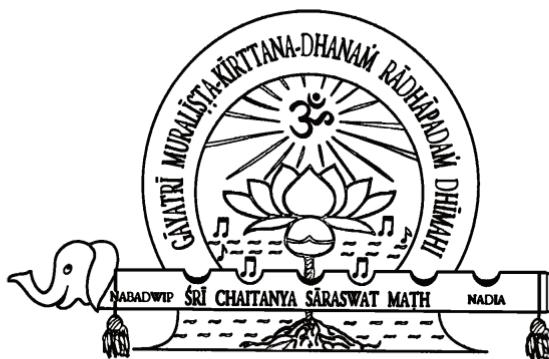
Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, London

All Glory to Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga

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**Reflections, Reminders and Guidelines of
Vaiṣṇava Standards, Behaviour and Etiquette**

**Compiled by Devāśiṣ Dāsādhikārī
Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh
London Branch**



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Compiled by Devashis Das

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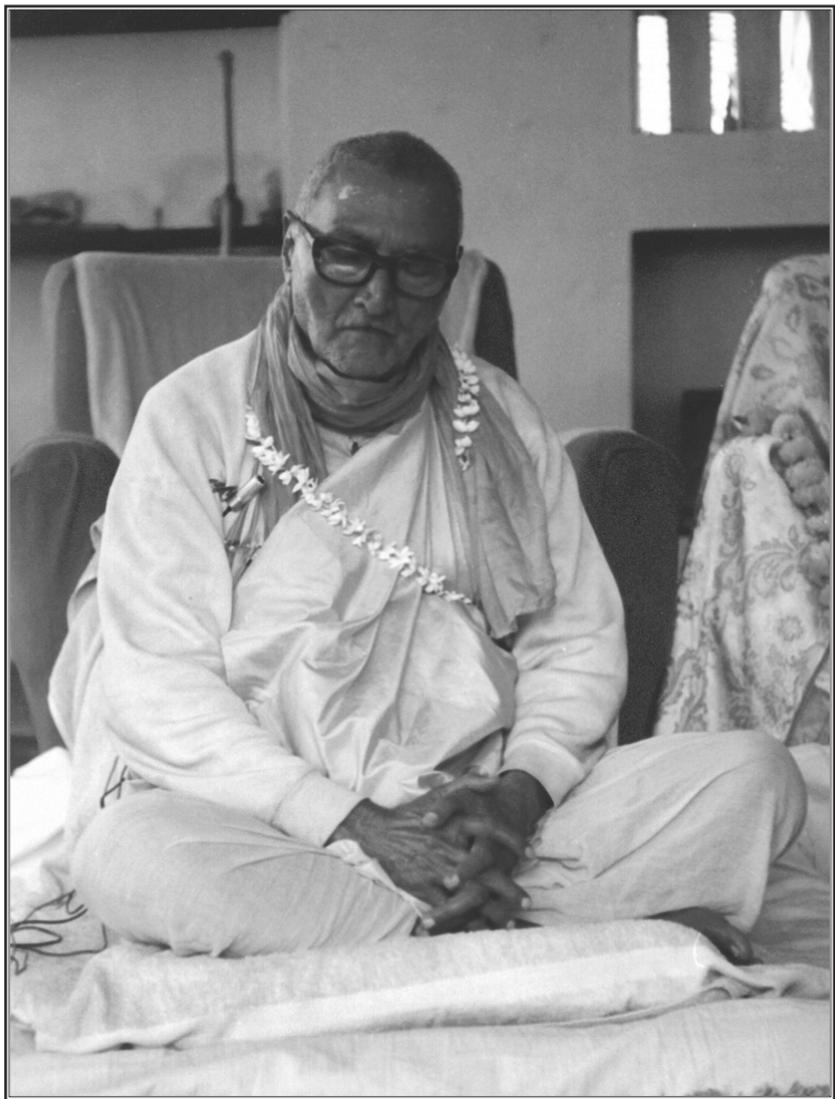
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His Divine Grace
Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj
President-Sevāite-Āchāryya
Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Math
and branches world-wide



His Divine Grace
Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj
Founder-Āchāryya
Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh

Introduction

When we first came to Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh in the early 1980's, the facilities for the devotees were very simple and quite austere, certainly by today's standards. Nevertheless, under the direct care and guidance of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj, we were quite happy to tolerate any apparent inconvenience for the opportunity to hear Hari-*kathā* from the lotus mouth of His Divine Grace.

In those days Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj before he accepted the seat of Sevāite-President-Āchāryya of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, was the ever present benefactor of the devotees. Taking care of the devotees was his obvious pleasure; he would make sure that we had all necessities and any medical care, even tending to the devotees ailments and problems himself. It wasn't even possible to buy bottled water then, and unless you were a little savvy and given good advice—and then prepared to follow it—the likelihood of getting ill was very high. But most of all, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj was always anxious to bring the devotees to the lotus feet of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj. Even when Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was reluctant to speak with us, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj would almost always intercede, and, persuaded by his beloved servitor-associate, Śrīla Guru Mahārāj gave so much wealth and grace to us. We felt ourselves extremely blessed.

During our time at the lotus feet of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj we were fortunate to receive training in the proper behaviour and practices of real Vaiṣṇavas, either by hearing directly from His Divine Grace, or by seeing the example of his disciples, the residents of the Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, headed by Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj.

Śrīpād Bhakti Prasūn Araṇya Mahārāj (who was then Kṛṣṇa Śaraṇa Prabhu) often brought us under his wing and took it upon himself to train us to be gentlemen and to leave our bad habits behind, which at the time we didn't even realise were 'bad' habits, unfavourable to devotional culture. Araṇya Mahārāj was a strict master and would chastise us strongly if we failed to come up to the standard. But, rather than his chastisement being the cause of discouragement, we actually thrived on it, and were prompted to try harder to gain his holy approval. This is not to say that we never felt humiliated, or even at times that we would never come up to the standard. I remember being given the honour of cleaning the temple cooking pots and my utter frustration and despair, to the point of tears, when those pots were returned to me for the sixth time because they were not clean enough! Finally, one of the senior *brahmachārīs* took pity on me and showed me how to clean a pot using half a house brick, straw, mud and ashes (there was no washing-up liquid and nylon scrubby pads or even hot water!).

It was a great feeling of inner satisfaction when you were expected to take your *Prasādam* with the Indian *brahmachārīs* and not with the 'visitors', which in those days was quite a rarity.

Now in Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj has provided so much facility for the devotees, and so many devotees come from all over the world that, perhaps, the fortune that we had of being hand trained in the culture of devotional life is no longer so readily available to all. The Mission of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh has grown so much that it is now our turn to pass on those lessons to the future generations of devotees.

It is this feeling that inspired me to begin a series of talks at the London Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh entitled 'Service Life'. Feeling so much encouragement and inspiration from the devo-

tees all around the world (the talks are broadcast over the internet due to the enthusiasm of my God Sister, Śrīmatī Divyaśārī Devī Dasī—herself the first initiated Western disciple of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj) I have compiled this small booklet of devotional standards and behaviour, which I was so fortunate to learn from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj, and their disciples.

Of course, someone may argue that these small points of etiquette and culture are not essential to devotion and may be seen more as ‘Bengali culture’ or ‘Indianisation’ and that Kṛṣṇa Consciousness is above such provincial ideals. In reply to this, I would say that, although this is broadly true, it is only too easy to ‘throw out the baby with the bath water.’ Everything has its ‘form,’ and devotional life is no exception, especially for the *sādhakas* or aspiring practitioners of devotion. Indeed, Śrīman Mahāprabhu, Lord Chaitanya Himself, has said that Vaiṣṇava etiquette is the ornament that makes a devotee beautiful in the eyes of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*Cc Antya-līlā* 4.130). Śrīman Mahāprabhu considered Vaiṣṇava etiquette so essential that he had His foremost devotee Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī write about it at length in his famous *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*.

Everything in this booklet is either stated in the authorised Scriptures of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, such as *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, and others, or is something that we have heard directly from the lotus mouth of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj or Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj. I wanted to bring as many of these points of etiquette together in one place for easy reference for the benefit of the devotees.

As the worldwide Mission of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh continues to expand, we need a model to which all of our Centres and Temples should aspire. Although there are other missions preach-

ing Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism around the world, Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh has its own unique flavour and sweetness, and the ideal model for our Mission is the Nabadwīp Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, which was conceived from the devotional heart of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj and made manifest by the devoted service of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj. It is my hope that the devotees will accept this small booklet as a help towards that end.

Perhaps the most important instruction given by Lord Śrī Chaitanyadev is His famous verse found in *Śikṣāṣṭakam*:

**trnād api sunīchena
taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena
kīrttanīyah sadā hariḥ**

“One who is humbler than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree, who gives due honour to others without desiring honour for himself, is qualified to always chant the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa.”

Śrīla Śrīdhār Mahārāj has often called this the “trade secret of devotion” and Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj says, “it is the only means to success in Service Life.”

Above all other things, if we can practise humility, tolerance and giving honour to all, while leaving aside any desire for our own honour or respect from others, then all the rules and regulations of Service Life will be very easy and joyful for us. Conversely, if we are proud, intolerant and disrespectful of others, thinking ourselves as the worthy object of others’ respect and honour, we will surely fail in our attempt for devotion, being disqualified from serving the Holy Name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The necessity of contemplating this instruction from Lord Chaitanya and trying with all

sincerity to make it the foremost practice of our spiritual life cannot be over-emphasised. This is our religion.

The guidelines illustrated in this booklet are given to us to help-foster this consciousness of humility, tolerance and giving honour in our practising lives.

Praying that the gentle devotees of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Math will overlook the inevitable mistakes and shortcomings of this booklet, I offer it to the lotus hands of my beloved guide and spiritual master, Om Viṣṇupād Śrī Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, in the hope that one day he may see fit to offer me for the service of his Lord and Master, Om Viṣṇupād Śrī Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj.

Aspiring to be a Vaiṣṇava's servant's servant,

Devāśiṣ Dās

(Secretary, London Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Math)
Appearance day of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, 28 January 2010



Śuddha-bhakata

(The Essential Foundation of Service Life)
By Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur

**śuddha-bhakata-charaṇa-reṇu,
bhajana-anukūla
bhakata-sevā, parama-siddhi,
prema-latikāra mūla**

(1) Dust from the lotus feet of pure devotees is conducive to devotional service, while service to the Vaiṣṇavas is itself the supreme perfection and the root of the tender creeper of divine love.

**mādhava-tithi, bhakti-janānī,
jatane pālana kori
krṣṇa-basati, basati boli’,
parama-ādare bori**

(2) I observe with great care the holy days like Ekādaśī and Janmāṣṭamī, for they are the mother of devotion. As my dwelling place I choose with the greatest reverence and love the transcendental abode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

**gaura āmāra, je-saba sthāne,
koralo bhramaṇa raṅge
se-saba sthāna, heribo āmi,
prañayi-bhakata-saṅge**

(3) All those places where my Lord Gaurasundar travelled for His Divine Pastimes I will visit in the company of loving devotees.

**mṛdaṅga-bādya, śunite mana,
abasara sadā jāche
gaura-bihita, kīrttana śuni’,
ānande hr̥doya nāche**

(4) My mind always begs for the opportunity to hear the music of the *mṛdaṅga*. Upon hearing the kind of *kīrttan* ordained by Lord Gaurachandra, my heart dances in ecstasy.

**jugala-mūrtti, dekhiyā mora,
parama-ānanda hoyā
prasāda-sevā korite hoyā,
sakala prapañcha jaya**

(5) By beholding the worshippable forms of the Divine Couple, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, I feel the greatest joy. By honouring the Lord’s *Prasādam* I conquer over all worldliness.

**je-dina gr̥he, bhajana dekhi,
gr̥hete goloka bhāya
charaṇa-sīdhu, dekhiyā gaṅgā,
sukha nā sīmā pāya**

(6) Goloka Vṛndāvan appears in my home whenever I see the worship and service of Lord Hari going on there. Upon seeing the Ganges, which is a river of nectar emanating from the lotus feet of the Lord, my happiness knows no bounds.

**tulasī dekhi’, juḍāya prāṇa,
mādhava-toṣaṇī jāni’
gaura-priya, śāka-sevane,
jīvana sārthaka māni**

(7) The sight of the holy Tulasī tree soothes my soul, for I know she gives pleasure to Lord Krishna. By honouring *śāk* [a green leafy vegetable preparation], a dear favourite of Lord Chaitanya, I consider life worthwhile.

**bhaktivinoda, kṛṣṇa-bhajane,
anukūla pāya jāhā
prati-divase, parama-sukhe,
svīkāra koroye tāhā**

(8) Whatever Bhaktivinod obtains that is conducive for the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he accepts every day with the greatest of joy.



PART 1

The Basics

The Four Moral Principles (five actually!)

All initiated devotees and those desiring to be initiated must follow the moral regulations as described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj has said, “Everywhere there is a natural process of rules and regulations. The four regulations are the basic foundation for everybody. These regulations are like learning the alphabet. Without learning the alphabet it is not possible to read any book.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam informs us that Kali is given these places in which to reside. Therefore we must avoid the following vices:

1. **Dyūtam.** No gambling, dishonesty or cheating others. This includes: immoral business practices, speculation on the stock markets and soliciting money from others under false pretences, even for so-called ‘devotional service’. One should earn money by honest means. Truthfulness is the main principle of morality in Kali-yuga. Without practising this principle, how will it be possible for us to represent the truth to others?

2. **Pānam.** No intoxication. Devotees must avoid all types of intoxication, including alcohol, tobacco, drugs, ‘herbal highs’, etc. According to Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj, *pānam* also includes the mania or intoxication of materialistic enjoyment. A devotee should be sober and austere. Without a sacrificing nature it will be im-

possible to practise spiritual discipline. Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj has clearly said that intoxication is the enemy of our faith.

3. *Striyam.* No unrestricted sexual activity. If we aspire for love of Godhead, then we must learn to curb selfish, mundane lust. The best path is the path of celibacy, but if one is unable to practise celibacy, then marriage is recommended, that is, one should live peacefully with one partner and together practise Kṛṣṇa Consciousness and work towards a life of full dedication to devotional service. Ideally, even within marriage there should only be sexual relations for procreation. The sexual impulse is so strong that it can completely divert us from our spiritual practice, compromising both our physical and mental purity. (Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj stated clearly that devotees who are to be married should do so according to the law of their country so that their marriage is recognised as legal. In this way we will not bring any disrepute or accusation of immorality upon our Gurudev's Mission.)

4. *Sūnā.* No meat eating, including all flesh foods, fish and eggs. This principal of non-violence is essential for the spiritual aspirant. The practice of animal slaughter fosters a brutish mentality and kills the quality of compassion, which is a prerequisite for all spiritual disciplines. Devotees should, as far as possible, only eat Kṛṣṇa *Prasādam*, and should therefore avoid cooking with onions, garlic and any other items that stimulate lower energy and are consequently not offerable to Lord Kṛṣṇa. According to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, one who prepares, cooks, serves, sells or is otherwise involved in the slaughter of animals is as equally responsible as one who directly kills and eats that animal.

5. *Jāta-rūpam.* No hoarding money. This fifth principle confirms the old adage that 'money is the root of all evil.' Due to the pursuit of wealth the whole world is under the illusion that money

equals freedom, independence and happiness. Devotees should reject this false idea and accept only what is necessary for their basic maintenance, using any excess that they have for the service of Kṛṣṇa. Amassing money provides facility for indulgence in all anti-devotional pursuits and is therefore unfavourable for surrender to Kṛṣṇa. The idea that, “I will become wealthy and then use that wealth for Kṛṣṇa’s service,” although no doubt noble in intent, is usually hugely time-consuming and diverting, with no guarantee of success. Furthermore, even if one is successful in gaining wealth, the reality is usually that this wealth corrupts us and gives us a false sense of ownership and self-importance. It is therefore recommended that we use what we have now in Kṛṣṇa’s service and maintain our life honestly and simply.

Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahāmantra

The chanting of the Holy Names of Kṛṣṇa in the form of both *japa* (chanting on the Tulasī-*mālā*) and *kīrttan* (in congregation with the devotees accompanied by *mṛdaṅga* and *karatālas*) is fundamental to devotional service.

Those who are initiated should normally chant a minimum of 16 rounds a day, and never less than 4 rounds (in emergencies). Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj said, “The *mālā* must not fast.”

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj stressed quality over quantity, so the quality of one’s *japa* is most important. This means we should set aside some time every day for our *japa* and not just try to fit it in whenever and wherever we can—to “get it done.” Chanting while driving, while chatting to others, while reading the newspaper, while surfing the net, while watching TV, while watching the world go by, and other types of incidental and inattentive chanting should be avoided.

Early Morning is Best

One can chant the Holy Names of the Lord at any time and in any place but the Scripture tells us that the early morning, especially the *brahma-muhūrta* (approximately one and a half hours before sunrise), is the best time for spiritual practice (*sādhana*). One who is serious about spiritual life should make a concerted effort to rise early and use this time for chanting the Holy Name and for worshipping the Lord.

Suitable Environment

It is best to practice *japa* in a favourable environment. This should be a quiet and clean place, free of distractions; anything that will demand our attention should be absent in that place so that we can give ourselves exclusively to our chanting.

Chant with Humility and in a Prayerful Mood

While chanting, we should know ourselves to be humble and lowly, and in this mood, remembering the lotus feet of our Gurudev, we should bow down to Lord Chaitanya and His associates, Who are the givers of the Holy Name, and chant the Pañcha-Tattva Mahāmantra:

**śrī kṛṣṇa-chaitanya prabhu nityānanda
śrī advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda**

We can then pray, “Oh Harināma, oh Holy Name, please reveal Yourself in my heart and dance on my tongue. Please make me Your humble servant.”

Then, holding the Tulasī-mālā between the thumb and 2nd finger (the index finger should not touch the beads while chanting), and beginning at the large bead next to the large central main bead (Sumeru), we should begin chanting the Mahāmantra:

**hare krṣṇa hare krṣṇa krṣṇa krṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare**

Lightly roll the bead between the thumb and 2nd finger and chant one mantra per bead, and then move to the next, and then the next, until you reach the small bead at the other end of the *mālā* next to the Sumeru bead—this is one round. Then turn the beads around and chant from the small bead to the large bead—this is another round. Do not cross over the Sumeru bead.

The Meaning of the Mantra

In the line of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhupād coming through Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākur to Śrīla Bhakti Rakshak Śrīdhār Mahārāj and Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Mahārāj it is clearly understood that the Mahāmantra is exclusively concerned with the worship and service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

‘Hare’ is the vocative form of ‘Harā,’ a Name of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and ‘Kṛṣṇa’ and ‘Rāma’ are both Names of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the original Supreme Personality of Godhead. We should understand that when we chant ‘Hare Rāma,’ this ‘Rāma’ does not refer to Lord Rāmachandra, the son of Daśaratha and hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, or even Lord Balarāma, but rather to Rādhā-Ramāṇa Rāma, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. Therefore, the Mantra is a pure prayer to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, begging Her, “Please engage me in devotional service.” By reading the books of our Maṭh you will get deeper and further explanation of this conception.

What Should I Think While Chanting?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj has told us that he directly asked this question to Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj who replied that we, “should not try to imagine the form of Kṛṣṇa or think of anything else, but should simply concentrate on hearing the Holy Name.”

Pronounce the Mantra clearly and carefully and hear what you are chanting. *Japa* is not a race and finishing quickly is not the goal. One should chant with faith, enthusiasm and full conviction that this Mahāmantra will give the highest benefit of life.

Loudly, Softly or Mentally?

One can chant softly or loudly, but one’s chanting should not be so loud as to cause others to feel disturbed or annoyed. Once, when a devotee was chanting loudly in front of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj, Mahārāj said to him, “It is for you Prabhu, not for me.” In other words, “You need to hear your chanting, but I (or others) do not.”

Chanting in the mind is also sanctioned in the Scriptures but requires much greater discipline and practice to be effective. Generally, it is better to be able to hear the sound of the Mantra and concentrate on hearing that.

Sitting, Standing or Walking?

Sitting cross-legged with back straight is best for doing *japa*, although any comfortable position that does not encourage sleep and that will be conducive to good chanting is acceptable. Should you feel sleepy, then you can stand or walk while chanting; but, if you do so, try to not be distracted by the changing environment.

Avoiding the Offences to the Holy Name

For our chanting to be really effective it must be free from offenses. The *Padma Purāṇa* lists ten offences to the Holy Name. A devotee should learn what these offences are and must carefully try to avoid them in his or her life.

The ten offences against the Holy Name are:

1. To insult or criticise the saints (the Vaiṣṇavas, who are the agents of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa).
2. To think the demigods (including Lord Śiva and Lord Brahmā) are equal to or greater than Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa; and to think that the Lord is different from His Name, Form, Qualities and Pastimes.
3. To think the Guru is an ordinary human being. (He is the agent through whom Kṛṣṇa comes to give Himself to us to save us.)
4. To blaspheme or criticise the Scriptures that describe the glories of the Holy Name and Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.
5. To think that the glories of the Holy Name of Lord Kṛṣṇa are simply exaggeration.
6. To consider the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa to be imaginary or mundane.
7. To sin and chant. (To think, “I can commit sinful activities because the Holy Name of the Lord will purify me”, is spiritually suicidal.)

8. To think chanting the Holy Name is equivalent to pious material activities, such as going on pilgrimage, doing humanitarian work, meditation, yoga or other ordinary religious acts.
9. To preach the glories of the Holy Name to those who have no faith, or to give the Holy Name to those who are not sincere.
10. To resist the transformation of consciousness that results from chanting the Holy Name and remain addicted to material things.

Nāmābhāsa (Reflection of the Holy Name)

To allow the pure Holy Name to manifest we must also avoid the four kinds of *Nāmābhāsa* or semblance of the Holy Name. Although *Nāmābhāsa* is not offensive chanting, and, if connected with previous *sukṛti* can bring one to the platform of *mukti* or liberation, it still does not give entrance to the plane of divine service where the *Śuddha-Nāma* (Pure Name) manifests.

The four kinds of *Nāmābhāsa* are:

1. ***Sāṅketyam*:** Indirect chanting—calling the name of another which happens to be the Name of the Lord. For example, if your friend’s name is ‘Kṛṣṇadāsa,’ when you call his name, *Nāmābhāsa* may be effected.
2. ***Pārihāsyam*:** Joke chanting—this may mean taking the Name in mocking imitation of the devotees or when referring to the devotees insultingly, e.g., “Hey, you Hare Kṛṣṇas should stop wasting your time and get a proper job!”

3. ***Stobham***: Code name chanting—using the Name as a mnemonic or pedagogical device, such as to indicate grammatical rules, learn beats on the *mṛdaṅga*, etc.

4. ***Helanam***: Neglectful chanting—such as saying, “Hari *bol*” or “Hare Kṛṣṇa” as a form of greeting instead of “Hello” or “Good-bye”, or chanting “Hare Kṛṣṇa,” to cast off indolence when waking.

Taking Care of the *Japa-Mālā*

The *japa-mālā* should be regarded as one’s Deity and given the same respect. One should always keep the *japa-mālā* in a clean white cotton bead bag. Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj said that the *japa-mālā* has no *varṇa* or *āśrama* and so should wear only a white dress—not saffron (even if one is a *brahmachārī* or *sannyāsī*) or coloured to match our dress, and certainly not with anything printed on the bead bag, or any pocket for keeping money and other things in.

One’s hands should always be clean before touching the *japa-mālā*, and when not being used the *japa-mālā* should be kept in a clean and respectable place.

Unless travelling, the *japa-mālā* should not be taken everywhere around one’s neck. One should not take *Prasādam* wearing one’s bead bag, and the *japa-mālā* should not be taken into a toilet or other unclean place unless absolutely unavoidable (i.e. if travelling alone). If one has their bead bag with them, this should be placed or hung in a respectable place before offering obeisance. The *japa-mālā* should not touch the feet, shoes, or anything else that is considered unclean.

A Final Word on Japa-Mālā

Sometimes in the course of preaching we are asked for *japa-mālā* from people interested in chanting *Hari-Nām*. In our Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh it is firmly established by Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj and Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj that *japa-mālā* is only given by the Guru. Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj said, “That they will do anything and everything and eat anything and everything and then touch the Tulasī-*mālā* is unthinkable to us.”

Those who are sincere about chanting *Hari-Nām* should be encouraged to come forward to receive *Hari-Nām* initiation if they can follow the moral principles and have a proper service mentality. Initiation should not be encouraged simply as a fashion or for counting heads. Initiation is the most serious commitment and connection for eternal life and should not be regarded in any trivial way. Otherwise, Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj considered it more important that newcomers associate with the devotees and study the books in their association to come to the proper conception and first understand the necessity for chanting the Holy Names.

So as not to discourage those who insist on chanting on beads but are not ready for initiation, they can be advised to make their own *mālā* from ordinary wooden beads if they so desire (available from a bead or craft shop) rather than using Tulasī beads. They should not be encouraged to purchase Tulasī-*mālā* from other sources. It should be understood, however, that Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj considered this kind of chanting without receiving the Mantra from a proper Guru to be merely imitation. Still, it is often said that imitation of a good thing is also a good thing.

Kīrttan

As often as possible the devotees should come together for *kīrttan* or the congregational chanting of the Holy Names. Lord Chaitanya's whole spiritual mission is the *saṅkīrttan* of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

It is always preferable for devotees to come together for *kīrttan* rather than sitting alone and performing *kīrttan* separately in their homes. Of course, if you have a family, then together you can all have *kīrttan* daily, but even better than this is to join with the other devotees and have *kīrttan*. Our Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh Temples and Centres all over the world have been established only to facilitate this *sankīrttan*. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj recently said, "I want that my disciples will come together at least once a week for Hari-*kīrttana*." If you live far from a local centre or temple, then invite the devotees to your home and make a local *saṅgha* with others interested in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness and have *kīrttan* in your home.

In the temple, the *kīrttan* forms the substantive part of the worship of the Deities and is integral to Their service. Without Hari-*Nām-sankīrttan* Temple worship of the Deities is arguably formal and incomplete.

Don't neglect the *kīrttan* of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is the only method of worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa in this age of Kali and is the prescribed method of spiritual realisation.

Studying the Books

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj has often stressed that the devotees should not just read the books of our Mission once, but again and again. The holy Scriptures are a living manifestation of the Divinity and

we will receive newer and newer light from them if we approach them in the proper way. To spend some time every day studying the books is essential for our progress in devotional life.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has advised that we should hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* everyday in the association of devotees. If possible, we can attend the classes given every day at the Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh Temples and Centres. If you are unable to do that, you should make some time each day to study the books of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj, Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj and the *Āchāryyas* of our line. The translations and commentaries of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* and other books by Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāj Prabhupād are authorised and most appropriate for our devotees to study. The higher books which deal with the Divine Amorous Pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa such as *Ujjvala-nīlamani*, *Govindalīlāmṛta*, *Gīta-govinda* and others are not to be read by the general devotees. These literatures are reserved for the highest *paramahamsa* devotees and we should remember the old adage that, “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” Trespassing in these areas while we are still struggling to control our own senses will cause us to fall from our service life. Even perfect mastery of the senses is in itself not sufficient qualification for entrance into this area of divinity. Only by the direct instruction of Śrī Guru would we ever read such books. Otherwise as Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj has expressed, “They have been written for us to worship.”

Devotional Service

Practical service or *sevā* is the most essential part of our spiritual practice. To render service to the devotees, to the Guru and to the Mission is the essence of our spiritual life. Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh is a forum for this service. The membership fee and ongo-

ing subscription to this spiritual forum is service. The dividend paid to the members of this forum is more service. In this way, our life can be transformed from a life of exploiting and being exploited to a life of divine service.

The Temples and Ashrams are places where we learn a life of giving, and our principle should always be to give more than we take.

Somehow or other we must maintain a connection of service. After all, if we wish to go to the plane of service (Goloka Vṛṇḍāvan, the spiritual world), then we must practise that service in this plane to make ourselves fit candidates for going there. Therefore, the principal and practise of service is indispensable in all stages of devotional life.

Service may be of many kinds, from giving some of our earnings to the Temple each week or month, to sweeping the floor of the Temple, to cooking for the Temple Deities, to inviting the devotees to our home to feed them, to chanting on the streets in *sankīrtan*,—and many more. If possible, we should try to find some service that we can render regularly and responsibly, and that service should be agreed, sanctioned and accepted by Śrī Guru or his representative. Devotional service is a privilege and we should feel blessed if we can get some responsible service to Hari, Guru and Vaiṣṇava, and even more so if we can maintain that service for our whole life.



PART 2

The Temple

Those living and serving in the Math, as well as those visiting the Math, should observe and maintain certain behaviour and regulations. This is meant to foster a consciousness of humility, tolerance and respect, both collectively and individually, and provides for the greatest harmony amongst the servitors of the Mission.

1. Offering Obeisance

When entering the Temple Room or *nāṭ-mandir* (literally dancing hall) one should offer their obeisance to the Temple Deities. This signifies one's surrender to the Lord and the giving up of one's idea of independence from Him.

If possible, one should stand to the left hand side of the Temple Room and make full obeisance by lying on the floor, keeping the Deities on one's left side.

According to the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, one should offer obeisance with eight limbs (*saṣṭāṅga daṇḍavat pranām*)—the feet, knees, chest, hands, head, sight, mind and words. The feet, knees, chest, hands and head should touch the ground, the body stretched out like a stick, hands extended in front.

If space is limited, one can offer *pañchāṅga pranām* or obeisance with five limbs—feet, knees, arms, head and words. The knees should be tucked under the stomach and the chest should not touch the ground. Again, the hands should be extended in front.

One should not offer obeisance on one hand, nor while holding something in the hands.

For modesty, women should not offer full *sastāṅga dandavat*.

While offering obeisance one should chant the Names of the Temple Deities, e.g. “*Jaya Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga-Gāndharvā-Govindasundarjū!*”

One should also offer obeisance to the devotees by bowing to the ground as described above (either *sastāṅga* or *pañchāṅga dandavat*) and chanting:

**vāñchhā-kalpatarubhyaś cha kṛpā-sindhubhya eva cha
patitānāṁ pāvenebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ**

“I offer my humble obeisance to all the Vaiṣṇavas who are spiritual desire-trees and who are so very merciful to the fallen.”

**sakala vaisṇava-pade mora namaskāra
ithe kichu aparādha nahuka āmāra
hoiyachen hoiben prabhur jato bhakta jan
vandanā kori’ āmi sabāra charaṇa**

“I respectfully bow to the lotus feet of all the Vaiṣṇavas, praying that there is no offence in my attempt to please them. To all Vaiṣṇavas who have been, and all Vaiṣṇavas who shall be, I offer my obeisance to their lotus feet.”

One should always offer one’s obeisance to a *sannyāsī* upon first seeing him. If one neglects to do this, Scripture prescribes that one should observe fasting for the rest of that day.

According to the *Bṛhan-nāradīya Purāṇa*, one should not physically offer obeisance to a Vaiṣṇava if he is bathing, collecting wood, picking flowers, carrying water or honouring *Prasādam*. Also, one should not offer obeisance while wearing shoes, bathing, eating, or wearing a hat or head covering.

The main principle is to not inconvenience the person to whom we are offering obeisance. If our obeisance will cause inconvenience, it is better to offer our obeisance mentally or just with folded palms.

2. Applying Tilak

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas mark their bodies in twelve places as a temple of the Lord by applying the yellow clay (*gopī-chandan*) from the river Jamunā. These marks are two parallel, vertical lines joined at the bottom with a leaf shape (representing a Tulasī leaf). These marks are known as *ūrdhvapuṇḍra* and symbolise the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa placed on the body of the devotee, indicating his or her surrender to the Lord.

Brahmānda Purāṇa states that the devotee who applies this *ūrdhvapuṇḍra* to his body with care and attention while looking into a mirror or reflective object, such as a pool of water, will certainly go to the Lord's supreme abode upon leaving this mortal body.

The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* states that *tilak* should not be uneven, crooked, un-centred, dirty or odorous.

On the forehead, the centre area of the two lines should be clear from the eyebrows to the hairline and joined at the bottom. The leaf shape should join the bottom of the lines and extend no more

than three quarters of the way down the nose. The lines should be drawn first and the leaf second.

Lord Viṣṇu is said to reside in the centre of the *tilak* mark, Lord Brahmā on the left and Lord Śiva on the right.

Before making tilak one can invoke the holy rivers into a water pot (*pañchapātra*) by pouring fresh water into that pot and adding a Tulasī leaf. Wrap the sacred thread around one's right thumb and make the *ankuśa-mudrā* (see diagram below).



Stirring the water clockwise with the middle finger (being careful to avoid touching the water with your finger nail) and remembering the River Ganges and other holy rivers, chant the following mantra:

gaṅge cha yamune chaiva
godāvarī sarasvatī
narmade sindho kāverī
jale 'smiṇ sannidhim kuru

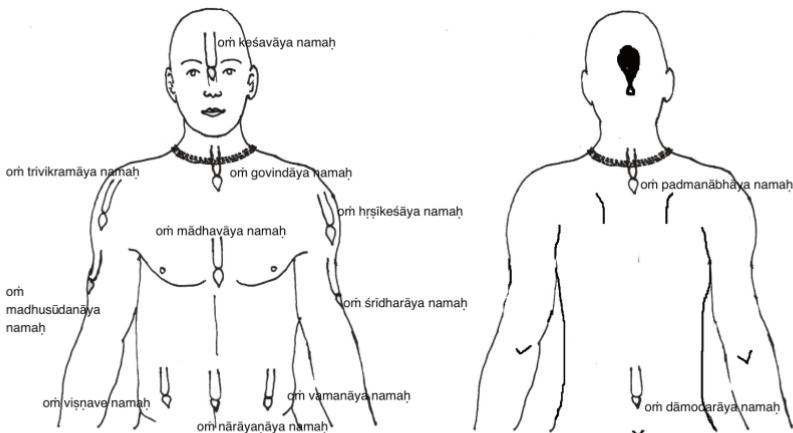
“O Gaṅgā, O Yamunā, O Godāvarī, O Sarasvatī, O Narmadā, O Sindhu, O Kāverī, please graciously become present in this water.”

To make *tilak*, one should place a few small spoonfuls of Ganges water in the palm of the left hand and make a paste by rubbing

the *gopī-chandan* in a circular motion in the water while chanting the following mantra:

**lalāṭe keśavaṁ dhyāyen nārāyaṇam athodare
vakṣah-sthale mādhavam tu govindam kaṇṭha-kūpake
viṣṇum cha dakṣiṇe kukṣau bāhau cha madhusūdanam
trivikramam kandhare tu vāmanam vāma-pārśvake
śrīdharam vāma-bāhau tu hṛṣikeśam tu kandhare
prṣṭhe tu padmanābhām cha katyām dāmodaram nyaset
tat prakṣālana-toyam tu vāsudevāya mūrdhani**

Marking the body with Tilak



The body is then marked in twelve places chanting the Name of the Lord which corresponds with each place of the body.

1. Forehead:
2. Stomach (above the navel):
3. Chest:
4. Throat:

**om keśavāya namaḥ
om nārāyaṇāya namaḥ
om mādhavāya namaḥ
om govindāya namaḥ**

5. Right side of stomach:	om̄ viṣṇave namaḥ
6. Right arm:	om̄ madhusūdanāya namaḥ
7. Right shoulder:	om̄ trivikramāya namaḥ
8. Left side of stomach:	om̄ vāmanāya namaḥ
9. Left arm:	om̄ śrīdharāya namaḥ
10. Left shoulder:	om̄ hṛṣikeśāya namaḥ
11. Upper back:	om̄ padmanābhāya namaḥ
12. Lower back:	om̄ dāmodarāya namaḥ

The *śikhā* is not marked with *tilak*, but, after washing the right hand, any remaining water should be wiped on the *śikhā* while chanting: **om̄ vāsudevāya namaḥ**

3. The Śikhā

Brahmachārīs and *sannyāsīs* living and serving in the temple should regularly shave their heads, and *grhaстhas* should keep their hair short and neat if they are unable to shave their head due to practical considerations. Initiated male devotees should keep a small tuft of hair at the back of the head. This is called a *śikhā*. The *śikhā* should not be bigger than about one and a half inches in diameter.

The *śikhā* should be tied in a slip knot and not left untied unless one is bathing, sleeping, or observing funeral rites or a period of mourning. The *śikhā* should not be braided or left dishevelled.

After bathing, a devotee should tie his *śikhā* while chanting the Brahma Gāyatrī mantra (or Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahāmantra if not initiated as a *brāhmaṇa*).

4. The Sacred Thread

If one has received the sacred thread, then it must be worn at all times. It should not be removed unless it is a life or death situation. Strictly speaking, if the thread is removed and one is then touched by a non-*brāhmaṇa*, one should again have a fire sacrifice to reinstate his sacred thread. The sacred thread should be changed regularly and one should not wait until it is old, worn or broken. It should be replaced with a new thread (tied by a Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇa*) by placing the new thread over the old and chanting Brahma Gāyatrī on both threads, and then discarding the old thread, and disposing of it in a sacred river or the ocean. The sacred thread is normally changed on either the Full Moon or on Ekādaśī.

The sacred thread should be hooked over the right ear when using the toilet to prevent it from becoming soiled. It is also said to help prevent the accidental discharge of semen in one's urine.

5. Chanting Gāyatrī

The Scriptures enjoin that one should chant the Gāyatrī mantras three times daily: at sunrise, noon, and sunset. However in our modern world it may not always be practical to chant Gāyatrī at noon therefore Śrīla Govinda Mahāraj has said one should chant at least in the morning and in the evening.

After taking bath one should sit on an *āsana* in a clean space and, after performing *āchamana*, wrapping the sacred thread around the thumb of the right hand (if a man), one should place his hand palm up above the naval and chant the mantras, counting on one's fingers as taught by Śrī Guru.

At sunrise and noon one should sit facing east, and at sunset one should face north. If one is in front of the Deity then he should face the Deity while chanting.

6. **Kaṇṭhī- Mālā (Tulasī Neck Beads)**

The Tulasī neck beads are given to the devotee by the Guru at the time of initiation. All initiated devotees should wear two or three strands of Tulasī beads around the neck at all times.

The *kaṇṭhī-mālā* is said to protect one from bad dreams, accidents, attack by weapons and the Yamadūtas (servants of the lord of death). First and foremost the devotees wear Tulasī-*mālā* because Tulasī Devī is most dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

7. **Dress in the Temple and when Representing the Mission.**

The Temple is a place meant for religious life and so one should dress accordingly.

A devotee's dress should be simple, clean and modest.

Men should wear a *dhotī* and *kurta* and women should wear a *sārī*.

Those giving class, leading the *kīrttan* (in and out of the temple), serving *Prasādam*, or cooking or assisting in the kitchen should wear the proper dress.

One should not wear perfumes, aftershave, excessive make-up, or lavish jewellery in the temple. Nor should one wear provocative or immodest clothing.

One should always be aware that our behaviour in public especially when wearing Vaiṣṇava dress will naturally reflect on our Gurudev and the Mission so we should be mindful to act appropriately at all times.

8. Cleanliness

One must bathe fully at least once a day and always after passing stool and before chanting Gāyatrī.

As far as possible, one should always wear clean, fresh clothing in the Temple.

One should not enter the Temple Room (*nāṭ-mandir*) without having washed one's hands and feet after eating or passing water.

One must always take bath after passing stool or sleeping and put on clean clothing before engaging in any service to the Deity or entering the kitchen.

One should not worship the Deity or cook for the Deity wearing clothes in which one has slept or eaten.

One should not enter the Temple Room (*nāṭ-mandir*) after visiting a crematorium/graveyard or after touching a dead body—one should bathe and put on clean clothes first.

One should not put their fingers in their mouth, nose or ears without washing them immediately afterwards.

One should not touch any sacred objects without washing their hands after they have become unclean.

One should not belch or pass air in front of the Deity.

Generally one should not cook for the Deity or do any direct service for the Temple Deity while menstruating. (However, Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj said that if a woman has a Deity of the Lord at her home, she should not avoid serving Him during her menstruation if there is no one else to do this service—Kṛṣṇa should not fast).

9. Behaviour

One should remain humble, tolerant and respectful at all times, but especially in the Temple environment.

One should try to see all devotees as our masters and try to render service to them as appropriate.

All men should be addressed as Prabhu (Master) and all women (except one's wife) should be addressed as Didi (Honoured Sister). Sannyāsīs are addressed as Mahārāj or Your Holiness.

One should not touch devotees or sacred objects with one's feet; neither should one step over devotees or sacred objects, nor anything to be offered to Hari, Guru or Vaiṣṇava (e.g. garlands, vegetables, etc.).

If by accident we touch anyone with our foot, we should immediately touch that person with our right hand and then touch our forehead with the right hand or folded palms, asking to be excused by that person.

While sitting in the Temple one's feet should be kept covered as far as possible. It is best to sit cross-legged and not holding one's

feet, ankles or knees. One should not spread one's legs or point one's feet towards the Deity, Guru, Tulasī or other sacred items or venerable persons.

According to *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, when in front of the Deity, one should not speak loudly, quarrel, chastise or speak harshly or in anger to others; neither should one praise others, speak coarsely, speak ill of the Devatas, lie, make any vow or engage in mundane talk.

One should always deal respectfully with members of the opposite sex. We may be Godbrothers and sisters, but it will not be appropriate to be over-familiar, flirtatious or physical with one another. All devotional relationships should foster dedication and service, not an exploitative or enjoying mood. The Temple should never be a ‘hunting’ ground for prospective marriage partners or casual, romantic relations.

Devotees should always be polite and courteous to all and avoid confrontation, arguments and displays of anger. Even if we are wronged, we should exercise great tolerance and restraint before the Vaiṣṇavas and think, “Whatever is happening to me is a result of my *karma* and I should therefore tolerate this.”

10. Attending the Temple Programme

Unless engaged in other service, all devotees should attend the temple programmes (*āratis*, *kīrttans* and classes). This is compulsory for all residents of the Math. The standard in Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Math is that if one does not attend the *maṅgal-ārati*, then one must fast until noon that day. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj has said anyone staying in the Math must daily attend two *ārati*'s and engage in some *sevā* in the temple as the

very minimum.

To fail to attend the *ārati*, *kīrttan* or class without proper reason is disrespectful, and one may want to question their reason for being at the temple if it is not for attending these functions, which are facilitated for us by Śrī Guru for our eternal benefit.

11. Respecting Sacred Items

Scripture informs us that all items used directly in the service of the Lord are non-different from the Lord and are the direct expansion of Lord Baladev (the original Saṅkarṣan). With this in mind, we should always be conscious of the sacred.

Books, *japa-mālā*, *karatālas*, etc., should not be kept on the floor or in an unclean place.

When reading any holy book or magazine, one should never lick ones fingers to turn the pages.

Never touch these items with one's feet. If by accident a sacred item falls to the floor or touches one's feet, then respectfully touch that item to the forehead and place it in a respectable place.

Sacred items should not be taken into the bathroom/toilet.

Pictures of Guru and Kṛṣṇa should be kept in respectable and appropriate places. All forms and symbols representing Kṛṣṇa should be treated with proper respect and reverence and should not be given to children as playthings, kept in inappropriate places (e.g. shoe areas, etc.), or exposed to the elements.

12. Honouring the Deities' Mahā-Prasādam (Nirmālyā)

Items that have been offered to the Temple Deities are known as *Nirmālyā Mahā-prasādam*. This may include: flowers, garlands, *chandan* (sandalwood pulp), Tulasī leaves and *mañjarīs*, ghee lamp and *charanāmrta* (bath water).

These items may be offered to the devotees by the Temple priest and should be respected in the appropriate manner.

(i) Flowers and garlands

Flowers and garlands should be smelt, worn, and touched to the head. Tulasī garlands may also be smelt and touched to the head, but not worn by the devotees. Garlands containing Tulasī may only be offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa (or Viṣṇu-tattva Deities).

Flower and garland *prasādam* should be disposed of in a river or an ocean and never thrown away with rubbish (no type of *prasādam* should ever be considered as rubbish).

(ii) Tulasī leaves and *mañjarīs*

Tulasī leaves and *mañjarīs* that have been offered to the Lord should be accepted with great respect and 'eaten' by the devotees. Tulasī *prasādam* should not be given to guests or others who, out of ignorance, may throw it away or spit it out.

Tulasī should not be used for medicine, cosmetics or other purposes by the devotees, and devotees should generally avoid products such as toothpaste, herb teas, etc. from India which contain

Tulasī (often called ‘sacred basil’ in the ingredients list). Unless it has been offered to the Lord, Tulasī should not be eaten by the devotees or offered to other gods or goddesses. Tulasī is only offered to Viṣṇu-tattva Deities.

(iii) **Charanāmṛta**

The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* states that drinking the water that has bathed the holy form of the Lord can destroy the effects of a million sins, including the killing of other living entities. According to the *Padma Purāṇa* anyone who honours the Lord’s *charanāmṛta*, even if they have never given in charity, never performed a religious sacrifice, never studied the Vedas, and never worshipped the Lord, becomes eligible for residence in Vaikunṭha (the spiritual world).

The *charanāmṛta* should be received from the Temple priest (or, in his absence, another devotee), who will drop a spoonful into the cupped palm of the right hand. This should be drunk by the devotee, who should take whatever remains in his palm on his head. The right hand should be held across the left hand to avoid spillage—this way of holding the hand is also appropriate for receiving flowers, Tulasī and other *prasādam* offered directly to the hand.

(iv) **Ghee Lamp**

The ghee lamp may be offered to the devotees during *ārati*. The person offering the *prasādam* lamp should offer it to the senior devotees (beginning with the *sannyāsīs*) first. Devotees, however, should not feel offended if missed.

One should briefly touch the flame with both hands and then touch

one's forehead with the understanding of receiving a blessing of light (inner illumination) from the Lord.

13. Kīrttan

Kīrttan should always be led by a fit devotee who is initiated and properly following the path of devotion. Normally, qualified devotees should be given this as a regular service by the Guru or his representative in the temple.

Similarly, devotees playing the *mṛdaṅga* (drum) and *karatālas* (hand cymbals) should know how to properly play these instruments, and how to keep time and follow the *kīrttan* leader. The *mṛdaṅga* player/s should be especially attentive to the *kīrttan* leader and know when to speed up, change the beat, slow down and end the *kīrttan*.

Only authorised *kīrttans* should be sung and with the proper melody and meter, for the time of day.

In Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh only *mṛdaṅga* and *karatālas* are allowed. This is the rule instituted by Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākur and followed by Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj and Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj. No other instruments, including the harmonium, are allowed.

The *kīrttan* should always be sweet and melodious and not just loud. The instruments should not drown out the *kīrttan* leader's singing.

As much as possible, one should dance in the *kīrttan*. This should not be for exhibitionism but for the pleasure of the Lord. Generally, one should sway from side to side, placing one foot in front

and across the other, and then the alternate foot. In a prayerful mood, one should clap or dance with arms raised or palms folded.

One's dancing should not endanger or inconvenience others. Displays of 'ecstasy,' fainting, crying or wailing and 'trances' should be avoided. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj advises us to always check our emotion if we want real devotion.

Men and women should not dance together.

14. Honouring and Serving Prasādam

(i) Honouring *Prasādam*

Prasādam means 'the Lord's Mercy': we should always remember this. Devotees do not 'eat' in the sense of consuming food, but rather the devotees 'honour' Kṛṣṇa *prasādam*.

Those foodstuffs which have been prepared with devotion and offered to the Lord are considered to be transformed from mundane food into a special, merciful manifestation of the Lord (*prasādam*). Properly honouring *prasādam* is as much a part of our spiritual practice as any other. In fact all of the Āchāryyas in our line agree that *prasādam* is the solution to the whole problem of mundane life. By living wholly on the remnants of the Lord we can cross over the illusory environment.

When honouring *prasādam*, one should be clean, having bathed before the meal. If it is not practical to take full bath, one should at least wash one's hands, mouth and, if appropriate, one's feet. One's śikhā should be tied, head uncovered and feet bare.

One should take *prasādam* punctually and when called. One

should not make the *prasādam* wait—this may be an offence, unless one has a specific duty which prevents one from honouring *prasādam* at the proper time.

Prasādam should be honoured in a clean and suitable area.

One should sit cross-legged on the floor (with a small *āsana*) or at a table. One should not spread their legs while honouring *prasādam*, nor should one keep the plate on one's lap.

One should always receive *prasādam* from a devotee—this helps us to remember that *prasādam* is grace and not 'food'. One should not serve themselves, but should ask a devotee to kindly give them *prasādam*.

Before beginning to 'eat', one should offer respects to the *prasādam* by chanting appropriate prayers (see section 15).

One should not get up while honouring *prasādam*. Should one require anything, one should ask those devotees serving the *prasādam*.

One should honour *prasādam* using the right hand only. With practice one can learn to tear breads, such as *chapātīs* or *purīs*, using the right hand only. One should not tear bread or other items with one's teeth or using the left hand. If at first this feels unnatural, then one should practise by sitting on the left hand during *prasādam* time until one loses the habit of using it during eating.

It is recommended to use the fingers of the right hand for eating as this stimulates digestion via the sensation of touch. If one is unable to eat using the fingers (this may feel alien or awkward to those unaccustomed to it, especially when taking wet prepara-

tions), it is acceptable to use a spoon.

One should accept only as much *prasādam* as one can comfortably honour. One should not overeat or waste *prasādam*.

If one does not want a particular preparation or has taken enough, then this should be indicated to the server by placing one's right hand a few inches above one's plate with the palm down and fingers spread to prevent them from serving more to one's plate.

One should not speak unnecessarily about mundane subjects while honouring *prasādam*.

After finishing one's meal, one should remain seated until the senior devotees present rise. Otherwise, one may take permission to leave from those senior.

After finishing *prasādam*, one should wash one's hands and mouth.

One should then properly clean the area where they have 'eaten' with water.

(ii) Serving Prasādam

Serving *prasādam* is an important service and essential to the proper culture of service life. As with all services, there is a right and a wrong way to serve *prasādam*. We should learn to serve *prasādam* to the Vaiṣṇavas with great care and attention.

Ideally, *prasādam* should be served by initiated devotees, but during festivals others may be recruited for this service as long as they are clean and appropriately dressed. One should wear a *dhotī* or *sārī* as appropriate.

One should not serve *prasādam* if one is unclean, feeling excessively hungry, anxious that one won't get any *prasādam* for oneself, or feeling angry or otherwise disturbed in mind.

The practice of making plates beforehand for the servers is contrary to devotion. One should serve the Vaiṣṇavas to their full satisfaction, and then happily take whatever remains. One should develop the attitude that, "If everything is distributed and nothing is left, I can fast, if that is Kṛṣṇa's will." Otherwise, one should happily sit and honour *prasādam* and allow others to serve.

The cook should make sure that enough *prasādam* is prepared to satisfy everyone. If *prasādam* runs out, then the cook should happily cook again as required.

Devotees should be seated on *āsanas* and *prasādam* should be served to them. Unless there is no other alternative, the practice of making the devotees queue up with plate in hand like at a cafeteria should be avoided.

Prasādam should not be served directly from the cooking pots but should be transferred into serving containers first. (Stainless steel buckets are ideal for this.)

A competent devotee should take charge of the serving at large gatherings, such as on festival days. He or she should supervise the servers.

Hot preparations should be served hot and all preparations should be served in a timely manner and in the correct order.

One should take care not to touch the plates or hands of the devo-

tees honouring *prasādam* with the serving utensil or serving container. One should not hold a devotee's cup or bowl while serving the *prasādam* into it; if the cup or bowl needs to be held steady, ask the devotee you are serving to do this, but take extra care not to pour hot *prasādam* onto their hand.

If one touches a plate or person with the serving utensil, then one should immediately wash one's hands and the utensil before continuing to distribute that preparation.

One should carefully drop *prasādam* onto a free area of the plate, taking care not to mix savoury preparations with sweet preparations.

Prasādam should not be given directly into anyone's hand. (This does not apply when distributing morsels of *Mahā-prasādam* at other times).

Each devotee serving *prasādam* should know what the preparation they are serving is—they should know, for example, if it is hot and spicy, savoury or sweet, suitable for children, what its main ingredients are, etc.

The serving should be led by a competent person who will distribute the rice, and all other servers should follow him. This is important if there is more than one area where *prasādam* is to be served. Those serving water and any smaller pre-rice preparations should be directed in which order those areas will be served and should distribute accordingly.

Prasādam should be served quickly, quietly and efficiently. This is a skill which devotees should be enthusiastic to learn.

The normal order in which the preparations are served is as follows:

- Water
- Any bitter foods, such as *sukhta* (to stimulate the appetite at the commencement of the meal) or *śāk*, and any salad
- Rice
- Dāl
- Savouries, such as pakorās, samosās, *ālu bhājā*, etc.
- Vegetable preparations (*subjis*).
Wet first and then dry.
- Chutneys, (to aid the digestion) etc.
- *Puṣpānna* (this is a bridge between savoury and sweet preparations)
- Sweets

Servings do not need to be large, but one should be attentive to replenish any item on devotees plates once it is finished. Devotees should never be left with an empty plate except at the end of the meal. Devotees should not have to wait for the next preparation to be served once serving has begun—hence, all servers should follow the head server.

One should not give so much that devotees are unable to finish. One should be generous when serving, but also intelligent to make sure that all items are distributed sensibly and to everyone. One should not hold back anything with the motive of preserving for later a preparation for oneself for later.

Those serving should not sit to take *prasādam* until all others have been served and are satisfied.

15. Prayers for Honouring Prasādam

**mahā-prasāde govinde
nāma-brahmaṇi vaiṣṇave
svalpa-puṇyavatāṁ rājan
viśvāso naiva jāyate**

(*Skanda Purāna*)

“O king, for those who have a very poor fund of piety, their faith in *Mahā-prasadam*, in Śrī Govinda, in the Holy Name and in the Vaiṣṇava is never born.”

**bhāi-re!
śarīra avidyā-jāl, joḍendriya tāhe kāl,
jīve phele viṣaya-sāgore
tā'ra madhye jihvā ati, lobhamoy sudurmati,
tā'ke jetā kaṭhina saṁsāre**

**kṛṣṇa baḍo doyāmoy, koribāre jihvā jay,
sva-prasād-anna dilo bhāi
sei annāmr̥ta pāo, rādhā-kṛṣṇa-guṇa gāo,
preme ḍāko chaitanya-nitāi**

“O brothers! This material body is a network of ignorance, and the senses are one's deadly enemies, for they throw the soul into the ocean of material sense enjoyment. Among the senses, the tongue is the most voracious and verily wicked; it is very difficult to conquer the tongue in this world.

“O brothers! Lord Kṛṣṇa is very merciful—just to control the tongue He has given us the remnants of His own food! Now please eat these nectarean grains while singing the glories of Their Lord-

ships Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and in love call out ‘Chaitanya! Nitāi!’”

PART 3

Other Observances

1. **Ekādaśī**

Ekādaśī is the eleventh lunar day after the full moon and the new moon. This date should be calculated locally by a competent astrologer/astronomer and may be different in other countries from the days calculated for India.

Lord Chaitanyadev has instructed that we should only observe the Ekādaśī *vrata* (vow) when it is a ‘pure’ Ekādaśī—that is, when the lunar day begins before the sunrise of the solar day on which it occurs. If the lunar day begins after the sunrise, then it is considered an ‘impure’ Ekādaśī, and so the *vrata* should be observed on the following day, Dvādaśī. In this case, although the Ekādaśī day in one’s own country may fall on the same day as it does in India, it may happen that it is observed on the Dvādaśī in India and the Ekādaśī in one’s own country, or vice versa.

During Ekādaśī the devotees will follow a fasting vow. On this day, all devotees must abstain from grains, beans and pulses. Those who are fit and healthy and able maintain their full service can observe a full fast, taking only water, or even no water. One should not fast if doing so will have an adverse effect on one’s health or prevent one from offering full service.

The standard observed in Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh is that only roots, fruits, nuts and milk are taken on Ekādaśī. No red vegetables such as carrots, beetroot or tomatoes are taken, nor leafy veg-

etables such as spinach, lettuce or cabbage.

As for spices, only ginger root, cumin and black pepper are used.

The principle is to minimise our enjoying spirit and simplify our food on Ekādaśī. Therefore any foods that increase our mood of enjoyment are contrary to this. This would include grain-free cakes, chocolates, grain-free pizza and other gratifying dishes contrived to circumvent the Ekādaśī rules.

One should use their time during fasting for increasing their service and spiritual practice.

One should also abstain from shaving and cutting nails and hair on the Ekādaśī day.

Normally the fast will begin after taking evening *prasādam* on the night before. The fast should be completed by taking grains after sunrise (or occasionally another specified time) on the following day and before the specified *pāraṇ* time. This is also calculated locally.

In Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh temples and centres no breakfast is served on Ekādaśī and the devotees will not eat until lunch time.

Kṛṣṇa does not fast on Ekādaśī, in fact, His appetite for enjoyment is even greater on Ekādaśī, and so the temple Deities should be offered all normal preparations, including rice, dāl, chapātīs, etc., and other extra preparations if possible. This *prasādam* can be distributed to the devotees to honour on the following day.

Ekādaśī is called Mādhava-*tithi* or the Lord's day and is especially meant for us to devote extra time for His service and the cultivation of our spiritual life. We should try to use our time properly on

these two days each month to increase our practice of devotion and reap the special benefit. This is the Lord's merciful arrangement for the upliftment of the fallen souls.

2. Vaiṣṇava Festivals

The appearance and disappearance days of the great Vaiṣṇavas and the Lord in His various manifestations are meant to be celebrated by the devotees.

Generally, to honour these special days the devotees will observe a half day fast until noon, except for Janmāṣṭamī (Lord Kṛṣṇa's Appearance Day), Gaura Pūrṇimā (Lord Chaitanya's Appearance Day) and Nṛsiṁha Chaturdaśī (Manifestation Day of Lord Narasiṁha, the half-man, half-lion *Avatāra* of the Lord), when full fast is observed until midnight on Janmāṣṭamī, moonrise on Gaura Pūrṇimā, and sunset on Nṛsiṁha Chaturdaśī. After these times, the devotees take *anukalpa* (non-grain) *prasādam* and break fast by taking grains the following day by the specified (*pāraṇ*) time.

Devotees should try to attend as many of these festivals as possible, but should especially try to attend:

Janmāṣṭamī and Nandotsava (which is also the appearance day of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāj)

Gaura Pūrṇimā and Jagannātha Miśra Ānandotsava

Nṛsiṁha Chaturdaśī

Rādhāṣṭamī

Govardhana Pūjā (Annakūṭa Mahotsava)

The Appearance Day (Vyāsa Pūjā) of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj

The Appearance Day (Vyāsa Pūjā) of Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj

The Disappearance Day of Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj

The Appearance Day of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākur

The Disappearance Day of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākur

The Disappearance Day of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāj

The Appearance Day of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākur

The Disappearance Day of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākur

Nityānanda Trayodaśī (Appearance Day of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu)

Baladeva Pūrṇimā (Appearance Day of Lord Balarāma)

The Disappearance Day of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākur

All festivals are observed by our Temples and Centres world-wide.

3. Kārttik

This is the last month of the monsoon in India. Traditionally sādhus would stay in one place during this time and practice penance and austerity for their spiritual advancement.

It is often the custom of *sannyāsīs* and *brahmachārīs* in Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh to refrain from shaving or cutting their hair during the Chāturmāsyā (four months of the monsoon) period.

During the Kārttik month (also known as the month of Dāmodara) extra songs are sung in the temple during the morning and evening, including *Dāmodarāṣṭakam* and *Rādhā-stuti*.

The Kārttik *vrata* is observed in Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh from the full-moon at the beginning of the month until the next full moon.



PART 4

Important Texts of Instruction

Daśa-vidha Nāmāparādha

The Ten Offences to the Holy Name

By Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj

hari-nāma mahāmantra sarvva-mantra-sāra
jādera koruṇābale jagate prachāra
sei nāma-parāyaṇ sādhu, mahājana
tāhādera nindā nā koriho kadāchana

Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahāmantra—of all mantras the best,
Throughout the world is preached
by saints' potent grace behest;
Such saints to the Name devoted, such pure souls great:
Never dare offend them—never show them hate.

vrajendranandana kṛṣṇa sarveśvareśvara
maheśvara ādi tāra sevana-tatpara
nāma chintāmaṇi kṛṣṇa-chaitanya-svarūpa
bheda-jñāna nā koribe līlā-guṇa-rūpa

Lord Kṛṣṇa, son of Nanda, of all lords the Leader—
The great Śiva and all the gods serve His feet forever;
The touchstone of the Name is Kṛṣṇa incarnate—
His Pastimes, nature, form, also think not separate.

**“guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana śāstrera pramāṇe
guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā kore bhāgyavāne”
se gurute martya-buddhi avajñādi tyagi
iṣṭa-lābha koro, nirantara nāma bhaji**

“Guru’s a form of Kṛṣṇa—the Scriptures corroborate;
In the form of Guru, Kṛṣṇa blesses the fortunate.”
Never offend that Guru by thinking him mere mortal;
Gain your highest objective—
serve the Name for time eternal.

**śruti, śruti-mātā-saha sātvata-purāṇa
śrī-nāma-charaṇa-padma kore nīrājana
sei śruti śāstra jebā koroye nindana
se aparadhīra saṅga koribe varjjana**

The Vedas with Mother Gāyatrī
and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam
Illuminate the lotus feet of Śrī Hari’s Name;
Whoever vilifies those Holy Vedic Scriptures—
Never keep their company, know them as offenders.

**nāmera mahimā sarvva-śāstrete vākhāne
atistuti, heno kabhu nā bhāviha mane
agastya, ananta, brahmā, śivādi satata
je nāma-mahimā-gāthā saṅkīrttana-rata
se nāma-mahimā-sindhu ke pāibe pāra
atistuti bole jei—sei durāchāra**

The glories of the Name—all Scriptures’ exaltation;
Dare not think their praise to be exaggeration.
Agastya, Ananta, Brahmā, Śiva, etc., ever

Sing the glories of that Name with full-hearted fervour.
Who can cross the ocean of the glories of that Name?
Whoever says ‘exaggeration’ have their sin to blame.

**kṛṣṇa-nāmāboli nitya golokera dhana
kalpita, prākāta, bhāve—aparādhi-jana**

The Holy Names of Kṛṣṇa—eternal wealth of Goloka:
Who thinks those Names imaginary, mundane—he’s offender.

**nāme sarvva-pāpa-kṣaya sarvva-śāstre kaya
sārā-dina pāpa kori sei bharasāya—
emata durbuddhi jāra sei aparādhi
māyā-pravañchita, duḥkha bhuñje niravadhi**

All Scriptures claim the Name all sin it can destroy,
But those who spend their time in sin making it a ploy—
Such a wicked attitude is that of an offender
Deceived by illusion, perpetually to suffer.

**atulya śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma pūrṇa-rasa-nidhi
tāra sama nā bhāviha śubha-karma ādi**

Incomparable Name of Kṛṣṇa—the treasure of ecstasy:
Never dare compare it with auspicious piety.

**nāme śraddhā-hina-jana—vidhātā vāñchita
tare nāma dāne aparādha suniśchita**

Those who’re faithless t’ward the Name—
deceived by Providence:
Giving them the Holy Name surely’s an offence.

śunīyāo kṛṣṇa-nāma-māhātmya apāra
je priti-rahita, sei narādhama chāra
aham̄tā mamatā jāra antare bāhire
śuddha kṛṣṇa-nāma tāra kabhu nāhi sphure

Despite them hearing the infinite glories of Kṛṣṇa's Name,
Those whose hearts don't melt in love are rascals of ill fame;
Only pride and avarice their thoughts and deeds do yield—
The Pure Name of Kṛṣṇa to them is ne'er revealed.

ei daśa aparādha koriyā varjjana
jena jana kore harināma saṅkīrttana
apūrvva śrī-kṛṣṇa-prema labhya tāre haya
nāma-prabhu tāra hṛde nitya vilasaya

Casting off these ten offences, leaving no exception,
Those pure souls who chant the Name
in Holy Congregation—
The miracle of love for Kṛṣṇa they will surely savour,
The Name Divine Himself will shine
within their hearts forever.



Śrī Upadeśāmṛta

By Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī

1

vācho vegam manasaḥ krodha-vegam
jihvā-vegam udaropastha-vegam
etān vegān yo viṣaheta dhīraḥ
sarvvām apīmāṁ pṛthivīm sa śisyāt

One who can control his speech, the dictates of the mind, anger, the tongue, the demands of the stomach and the carnal appetite —that person of steady nature is fit to teach the whole world.

2

atyāhāraḥ prayāsaś cha
prajalpo niyamāgrahaḥ
jana-saṅgaś cha laulyaṁ cha
śadbhir bhaktir vinaśyati

One's devotional life will be ruined by the following six practices: (1) amassing more wealth than one requires; (2) over-endeavouring for mundane objectives; (3) engaging in mundane and unnecessary talk; (4) neglecting the Scriptural rules or fanatical adherence to those rules for their own sake; (5) keeping company with materialists; and (6) being greedy for material enjoyment or achievement.

3

utsāhān niśchayād dhairyāt
tat-tat-karma-pravartanāt
saṅga-tyāgāt sato vṛtteḥ
śadbhir bhaktiḥ prasidhyati

One becomes successful in devotional life by the following six principles: (1) enthusiasm; (2) certitude; (3) patience; (4) culturing devotion through hearing, chanting, remembrance, serving and other scripturally enjoined activities; (5) giving up the company of non-devotees; and (6) following in the footsteps of the *Mahājans*.

4

**dadāti pratigṛhṇāti
guhyam ākhyāti pṛchchhati
bhūnkte bhojayate chaiva
śad-vidham prīti-lakṣaṇam**

Six exchanges of love between devotees: (1) giving gifts and offerings of respect; (2) graciously accepting such offerings; (3) revealing one's mind in confidence; (4) enquiring about the Lord's confidential service; (5) feeding the devotees; and (6) honouring the *prasādam* offered by a devotee.

5

**kṛṣneti yasya giri taṁ manasādriyeta
dīkṣāsti chet praṇatibhiś cha bhajantam Iśam
śuśrūṣayā bhajana-vijñam ananyam anya-
nindādi-sūnya-hṛḍam īpsita-saṅga-labdhyā**

Anyone who chants the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa should be honoured within one's mind. A devotee who has been properly initiated and is engaged in the cultivation of devotional life should be honoured with humble obeisance and kept as one's dear friend. And that devotee whose service is unalloyed and whose heart is offenceless and pure—one should serve such a devotee with all earnestness.

6

dṛṣṭaiḥ svabhāva-janitair vapusāś cha doṣair
na prākṛtatvam iha bhakta-janasya paśyet
gaṅgāmbhasām na khalu budbuda-phena-paṅkair
brahma-dravatvam apagachchhati nīra-dharmaiḥ

One should never regard the body of a pure devotee of the Lord to be mundane or defective in any way. Just as the water of the River Ganges is always spiritually pure even though it may appear filled with all kinds of impurities, so one should see the devotee of the Lord.

7

syāt kṛṣṇa-nāma-charitādi-sitāpy avidyā-
pittopatapta-rasanasya na rochikā nu
kintv ādarād anudinām khalu saiva juṣṭā
svādvī kramād bhavati tad-gada-mūla-hantrī

The Holy Name, Pastimes, Form and Nature of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa are all as sweet as sugar candy, but when one's tongue is diseased with the bile of *avidyā* (ignorance) one cannot taste that sweetness. But how wonderful! Simply by taking the medicine of those Holy Names again and again, that sweetness gradually awakens and one's disease is destroyed at the very root.

8

tan-nāma-rūpa-charitādi-sukīrtanānu-
smṛtyoh krameṇa rasanā-manasī niyojya
tiṣṭhan vraje tad-anurāgi janānugāmī
kālam nayed akhilam ity upadeṣa-sāram

One should constantly engage in the wonderful *saṅkīrtan* of the

Lord's Holy Name, Form, Qualities and Pastimes. Absorbing one's tongue and mind in this way, one should make their heart as the abode of the Lord and serve under the direction of the true Vaiṣṇavas. This is the essence of all spiritual instruction.

9

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

The holy city of Mathurā is above even Vaikuṇṭha Dhām because Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa made His divine advent there. Higher still are the forests of Śrī Vṛṇḍāvan, where that same Lord Kṛṣṇa revealed His pastimes of Love. Higher than Vṛṇḍāvan is the King of Mountains, Śrī Govardhan. And highest of all is that place which overflows with the ambrosia of loving devotion to the Lord of Gokula, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and is known as Śrī Rādhā Kuṇḍa. Who, then, amongst the discerning devotees would not serve that most sacred pond located at the foot of Govardhan Hill?

10

**karmibhyah parito hareḥ priyatayā vyaktim yayur jñāninas
tebhyo jñāna-vimukta-bhakti-paramāḥ premaika-niṣṭhās tataḥ
tebhyas tāḥ paśu-pāla-paṅkaja-dṛśas tābhyo 'pi sā rādhikā
preṣṭhā tadvad iyāṁ tadīya-sarasi tāṁ nāśrayet kaḥ kṛtī**

The holy Scriptures declare that of all those desiring elevation, he who is situated in knowledge is favoured by the Supreme Lord Hari. Of those who are liberated by knowledge, one who takes to the path of devotion is the best. And amongst the devotees, one who has attained to pure love of Kṛṣṇa (*premaika-niṣṭhāḥ*) is best of all. Exalted above all such pure devotees are the cowherd girls

(*Gopīs*) of Vṛndāvan, who are fully dependant on the transcendental cowherd boy, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Of all the *Gopīs*, one stands alone in Her super-excellent devotion, and She is known as Śrī Rādhikā, the most beloved of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Likewise, Her holy bathing place, Śrī Rādhā Kuṇḍa, is equally adored by Lord Kṛṣṇa. Those devotees who take full shelter of this Rādhā Kuṇḍa are the most fortunate souls in all of creation.

11

kr̄ṣṇasyochedhāḥ praṇaya-vasatiḥ preyasibhyo 'pi rādhā
kuṇḍam chāsyā munibhir abhitas tādṛg eva vyadhāyi
yat preṣṭhair apy alam asulabham kiṁ punar bhakti-bhājām
tat premedam sakṛd api sarah snātūr āviṣkaroti

Of all those who are beloved of Kṛṣṇa, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is by far the most cherished object of His loving heart. The wisest sages concur that Śrī Rādhā Kundā holds an equal place in His transcendental affection. The service of that sacred Kundā is rarely attained even by the greatest of devotees, what to speak of those *sādhakas* aspiring for service life. One who bathes in the waters of this most holy of holy places just once will certainly develop full ecstatic Love of Kṛṣṇa (*Kṛṣṇa-prema*).

(n.b. It should be mentioned here that Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj has informed us in this regard that the physical act of entering Rādhā Kundā and touching Her with our feet is strictly forbidden. In a prayerful and humble mood, kneeling on Her banks, one may take a palmful of the water from Rādhā Kundā and pour that on one's head. Approaching Śrī Rādhā Kundā in this cautious and respectful way, without making any offence, and with proper consciousness, will constitute a full bath in Her waters.)



Upadeśāvali

By Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākur

1

Param vijayate śrī kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam—Supreme victory to the Universal Church of the congregational chanting of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Holy Names—the sole object of worship of the Gauḍīya Maṭh.

2

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the *viṣāya-vigraha*, the object of the devotees love, is the sole enjoyer and all others are to be enjoyed by Him.

3

Those ignorant persons who do not perform Hari-*bhajan* are murderers of their own souls.

4

The acceptance of Śrī Hari-*Nām* and direct realisation of Bhagavān are one and the same thing.

5

Those who consider other gods to be equal with Viṣṇu can never serve Bhagavān.

6

Establishing a printing press for publishing devotional literature and preaching by organising Nāma-haṭṭa programmes is real service to Śrī Navadwīp Dhām.

7

We are not doers of good or bad deeds, neither are we scholars or

illiterates. Rather, as initiates into the mantra; *kīrtanīya sadā hari*, we are the humble carriers of the shoes of the devotees of Śrī Hari.

8

To preach without proper conduct will not be devotion but *karma* (mundane action). Without finding fault with others, one should carefully correct one's self. This is my personal instruction to you all.

9

Our life's goal is to serve the *Braja-bāsīs* who are suffering in the fire of separation from Kṛṣṇa since He left Vṛndāvan to reside in Mathurā.

10

If we desire an auspicious life then we should never listen to the opinions of the countless people of this world, but rather we should attend only the instructions from the transcendental plane.

11

It is better to be born as an animal, bird, insect or any other species than to take shelter of deceit. Only honesty can give a person real auspiciousness.

12

Vaiṣṇavism means to be simple-hearted. To be a servant of a *paramahaṁsa* Vaiṣṇava, one must practise simplicity and this will make one a topmost *brāhmaṇa*.

13

Real compassion is to draw the conditioned souls away from their perverse attachment with the material nature. If even one soul can

be rescued from the fortress of Mahāmāyā, then this is infinitely more compassionate than constructing countless hospitals.

14

We are not in this world to be construction workers; we are the bearers of the teachings of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya.

15

Our life in this body is very short but by profusely engaging in *Hari-kīrtan* we will reap the ultimate reward of life's treasure when we relinquish these mortal coils.

16

The desired object of our life's goal is the dust from the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa, the fulfiller of Śrī Chaitanyadev's innermost desire.

17

If I stop preaching the Absolute Truth for fear that some people may be displeased, then I will have deviated from the path of Vedic truth and I would embrace the untrue path—an atheist inimical to the Vedas, who has no faith in Bhagavān—the very embodiment of Truth.

18

The true vision of Kṛṣṇa (*darśan*) is only attainable through the ears, by hearing *Hari-kathā* from the pure Vaiṣṇava. There is no other way.

19

Wherever *Hari-kathā* is spoken is automatically a Holy Place.

20

Authentic *śravanam* (hearing) is accomplished through *Hari-kīrtan*. This in turn gives us the opportunity for genuine *smaraṇam* (remembrance). Only by this process does the internal service to

the *aṣṭakālīya-līlā* (the Divine Couple's eternal pastimes in the eight parts of the day) become possible.

21

The loud calling of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Holy Names should be understood to be *bhakti*.

22

The Supreme Lord only accepts the offerings of those who chant Hari-*Nām* at least one-hundred thousand times daily.

23

By sincerely endeavoring to chant Hari-*Nām* without offence by constant practice, one's offences will fade away and the Pure Name will manifest on one's tongue.

24

One should not be discouraged when mundane thoughts arise while chanting Hari-*Nām*. These useless thoughts will gradually disappear by continued chanting and so one should not worry. Dedicate your mind, body and words to serving Śrī Nām and continue to chant with great persistence. Soon Śrī Nām Prabhu will give His *darśan*. Simply continuing to chant until all of one's *anarthas* (obstacles) are removed will automatically award full realisation of His Form, Qualities and Pastimes.



Śrī Daśa-Mūla

(The Ten Essential Principles of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness)
By Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur

1

āmnāyah prāha tattvam harim iha
paramam sarva-śaktim rasābdhim
tad bhinnamśāmś cha jīvān prakṛti-kavalitāmś
tad vimuktāmś cha bhāvāt
bhedābheda-prakāśam sakalam api hareḥ
sādhanam śuddha bhaktim
sādhyam yat pṛitim evety upadiśati janān
gaura-chandraḥ svayam saḥ

The wisdom revealed by Lord Śrī Gaurachandra is described in brief as follows:

- (1) The supreme teachings are the *Vedas* and allied Scriptures revealed in divine succession. They firmly establish that:
- (2) Śrī Hari is the Supreme Absolute Truth;
- (3) He is omnipotent;
- (4) He is the ocean of divine ecstasy;
- (5) The living entities are the parts and parcels of Śrī Hari;
- (6) Some living entities are enslaved by material nature;
- (7) Some living entities are liberated from material nature;
- (8) The whole creation is an inconceivable manifestation of simultaneous oneness and difference with Śrī Hari;
- (9) Unalloyed devotion is the only means of liberation for the conditioned souls; and
- (10) Love for the Supreme Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is the singular ultimate objective.

Thus, in this verse, the Ten Essential Principles are revealed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya, who Himself personifies these divine teachings.

**svataḥ siddho vedo hari-dayita-vedhaḥ-prabhṛtitaḥ
pramāṇam sat-prāptam pramiti-viṣayāṁ tān nava-vidhān
tathā pratyakṣādi-pramiti-sahitam sādhayati no
na yuktis tarkākhyā praviśati tathā śakti-rahitā**

Those supreme sacred teachings are the perfect Vedas received in the line of Lord Brahmā, the beloved servitor of the Supreme Lord Hari and the fit recipient of His grace. Assisted by our own favourable perception, aural reception, and inference, those supreme teachings establish beyond all doubt the nine truths (2-10 above). Common logic can never approach the inconceivable; argument cannot enter into this line of thought.

Explanation

In this respect, the wise advice expounded by Śrī Jīva Prabhu runs thus –

In spite of highly developed intellect and expertise, all men are inherently defective due to being prone to four kinds of illusion (namely; the tendency to commit mistakes, the tendency to be deluded, the tendency to cheat, and the limitation of imperfect senses), and so they are unfit for realising transcendental spiritual knowledge, which is inconceivable by nature. For this reason, the ten propositions perceived by them are also faulty and imperfect. As such, the intelligence of the living entities is unable to ascertain the inconceivable nature of transcendental truth; and, accordingly, through such understanding, no spiritual aspect of wisdom can be proved. But if we are interested in realising the inconceivable, wonderful aspects of the transcendental, omnipresent truth, we should accept the authoritative Vedic Scriptures as the fountainhead of all material and spiritual wisdom perpetuated through the eternally continuing chain of disciplic succession.

Why are we so interested in the conviction that the Vedas are authentic? Replying to such a question, it has been stated in the *Brahma-sūtra* (2.1.11) that human intelligence can never be satisfied through arguments; and as such no wisdom of spiritual transcendental truth can be attained by means of argument. In *Mahābhārat* (*Bhīṣma-parvva*, 5.22) it is said that transcendental subject matters can never be considered discernible through argument. Again, *Brahma-sūtra* (1.1.3) says that the Scriptures are the only source of discerning anything relating to knowledge of Godhead, and that (2.1.17) revelation is the only vehicle for discerning transcendental subject matters. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.20.4), it is said: “My dear Lord, in order to understand those things beyond direct experience—such as spiritual liberation or attainment of heaven and other material enjoyments beyond our present capacity—and in general to understand the means and end of all things, the forefathers, demigods and human beings must consult the Vedic literatures, which are Your own laws, for these constitute the highest evidence and revelation.” In these words, the great sage Śrī Vyāsadev has asserted that the writings of the Vedic Scriptures revealed as the divine instruction have been accepted as authentic and authoritative.

3

**haris tv ekaṁ tattvam̄ vidhi-śiva-sureśa-praṇamito
yad evedam̄ brahma prakṛti-rahitam̄ tat tanu-mahaḥ
parātmā tasyāṁśo jagad anugato viśva-janakaḥ
sa vai rādhā-kānto nava-jalada-kāntiś chid udayaḥ**

Śrī Hari, unto whom Brahmā, Śiva and Indra offer their prostrate obeisance, is the singular Supreme Truth. The non-differentiative neutral *Brahman* is simply the brilliance of Śrī Hari’s form. The Supersoul, *Paramātman*, the universal Creator who has entered the universe, is just a plenary portion of Śrī Hari. That Śrī Hari, His bodily hue of the fresh raincloud, is the divine darling of Śrī Rādhā.

4

**parākhyāyāḥ śakter apṛthaḡ api sa sve mahimani
sthito jīvākhyāṁ svām achid abhihitāṁ tāṁ tripadikāṁ
svatantrechchhaḥ śaktiṁ sakala-viṣaye preraṇa-paro
vikārādyaiḥ śūnyaiḥ parama-puruṣo 'yam vijayate**

Although He is inseparable from His inconceivable divine potency, He remains independent by His sweet will. He perpetually activates all that be by His divine potency in three ways: (i) the potency of the innumerable distinct spiritual particles or souls; (ii) His personal potency; and (iii) the illusory potency (*māyā*). Despite doing all this, He is personally in all respects eternally resplendent as the immutable Supreme Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

5

**sa vai hlādinyāś cha praṇaya-vikṛter hlādana-ratas-
tathā saṁvich-chhakti-prakaṭita-rahobhāva-rasitah
tayā śrī-sandhinyā kṛta-viṣada-tad-dhāma-nichaye
rasāmbhodhau magno vraja-rasa-vilāsī vijayate**

The personal potency of the Supreme Lord is comprised of three basic potencies: *hlādini*, the ecstatic; *saṁvit*, the perceptual; and *sandhinī*, the existential. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's heart is always deep in the loving emotion of His ecstatic potency, and His intrinsic nature is to be ever newly ecstatic by His internal emotion made manifest by His perceptual potency. In His holy abodes headed by Śrī Vṛndāvan, which are manifest by His existential potency, Śrī Kṛṣṇa—that whimsical enjoyer of the sweetness of His Vraja Pastimes—presides graciously, merged in the eternal ocean of joy.

6

sphuliṅgā ṛddhāgner iva chid-aṇavo jīva-nichayā
hareḥ sūryasyaivāpṛthag api tu tad-bheda-viṣayāḥ
vaśe māyā yasya prakṛti-patir eveśvara iha
sa jīvo mukto 'pi prakṛti-vaśa-yogyāḥ svaguṇataḥ

As sparks are situated on the periphery of blazing fire, similarly, the unlimited souls, who are atomic particles of consciousness, are as rays of the original sun of consciousness, Śrī Hari. Despite being inseparable from Śrī Hari, those unlimited souls are eternally separate. The eternal distinction between the Lord and the soul is this: that person who by His specific nature is the master of material nature—He is the Lord; and one who, even in his liberated state, is by nature prone to be subjugated by the illusory nature—he is the *jīva*.

7

svarūpārthaīr hīnān nija-sukha-parān kṛṣṇa-vimukhān
harer māyā-danḍyān guṇa-nigada-jälaiḥ kalayati
tathā sthūlair liṅgair dvividha-varaṇaiḥ kleśa-nikarair
mahākarmālānair nayati patitān svarga-nirayau

By his innate nature, the soul is Kṛṣṇa's faithful servant. The fallen souls have forgotten that innate nature, and, bent on fulfilling their selfish pleasures, have become averse to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They deserve punishment, and the *māyā* potency of the Lord takes them captive in the chains of the illusory modes of illumination, activation and stultification, and leads them to heaven and hell by binding them with the dual envelopes of the gross and subtle bodies, afflicting them with multifarious worldly tribulations by the force of overwhelming karmic (reactionary) bondage.

8

**yadā bhrāmam bhrāmam hari-rasa-galad-vaiṣṇava-janam
kadāchit saṁpaśyamīs tad-anugamane syād ruchi-yutah
tadā kṛṣṇāvṛttyā tyajati śanakair māyika-daśām
svarūpam vibhrāṇo vimala-rasa-bhogam sa kurute**

After wandering throughout the higher and lower species of life, when he is blessed with a holy glimpse of a Vaiṣṇava whose heart is melted in the joy of love for the Supreme Lord Hari, the attraction to live the life of following in the wake of the Vaiṣṇava is born for the conditioned soul. Continuously chanting the Holy Name and Glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa, his life of illusory existence is gradually dispelled. He soon attains to his own intrinsic form and becomes eligible to revel in the joy of the unadulterated service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

9

**hareḥ śakteḥ sarvam chid-achid-akhilam syāt pariṇatir
vivartam no satyam śruti-mata-viruddham kali-malam
harer bhedābhedaśruti-vihita-tattvam suvimalam
tataḥ premṇah siddhir bhavati nitarām nitya-viṣaye**

The entire creation, conscious and unconscious, is a transformation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's potency. *Vivartavād*, the theory of illusion, is fallacious—a contamination of the age of Kali, contradictory to the wisdom of the Veda. The perfectly pure principle recognised by the Veda is the principle of inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction, known as *achintya-bhedābheda-tattva*. From that axiomatic teaching, the perfection of love for the Supreme Truth is ever realised.

10

**śrutiḥ kṛṣṇākhyānam smaraṇa-nati-pūjā-vidhi-gaṇas
tathā dāsyam sakhyam paricharaṇam apy ātma-dadanam
navāṅgāni śraddhā-pavita-hṛdayaḥ sādhayati vā
vraje sevā-lubdho vimala-rasa-bhāvam sa labhate**

Hearing, chanting, remembering, praying, worshipping, serving, befriending, attending the lotus feet of the Lord and offering one's very self—cultivating these ninefold integral limbs of devotion with a heart sanctified by faith, the soul becomes filled with the deep aspiration for divine service in Śrī Vṛndāvan and attains the nectar of pure love divine for Kṛṣṇa.

11

**svarūpāvasthāne madhura-rasa-bhāvodaya iha
vraje rādhā-kṛṣṇa-svajana-jana bhāvam hṛdi vahan
parānande prītiṁ jagad-atula-sampat-sukham aho
vilāsākhye tattve parama-paricharyam sa labhate**

When the soul's practice in devotion (*sādhana-bhakti*) becomes fully mature and he is established in his intrinsic form, the dawning of love in divine consorthood appears in his heart by virtue of the ecstatic potency—a deep aspiration to follow in the wake of the personal associate-servitors of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vraja awakens in the innermost regions of his heart. Gradually his heart is captured by the divine ecstasy personified, and he attains the supreme joy, unparalleled in the entire world—the zenith of personal service unto the One known as the playful sweet Absolute. There is no greater attainment for the *jīva*.

12

**prabhu kaḥ ko jīvāḥ katham idam achid-viśvam iti vā
vichāryaitān arthān hari-bhajana-kṛch-chhāstra-caturāḥ
abhedāṁśām dharmān sakalam aparādham pariḥarān
harer nāmānandām pibati hari-dāso hari-janaiḥ**

“Who is Kṛṣṇa? And who am I, the soul? And what are the unconscious and conscious worlds?”

Deliberating on these matters, the person who is ever earnest in his service to the Lord Hari, and who is adept in the purports of the Scriptures, abandons the desire for oneness with the Absolute, all ‘do’s and don’ts’ of the world, and all kinds of offences—and in his innate nature of a servitor of Hari he ever drinks the nectar of the Holy Name in the company of the holy.

13

**sāṁsevya daśa-mūlam vai hitvā 'vidyāmayām janah
bhāva-puṣṭim tathā tuṣṭim labhate sādhu-saṅgataḥ**

Embracing these ten root principles, the soul deals the death blow to the malady of nescience: his devotional heart is nourished and satisfied in the holy association of the devotees.



Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam

(Eight Verses of Instruction)

By Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya

1

**cheto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahādāvagni-nirvāpaṇam
śreyah-kairava-chandrikā-vitaranam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-vardhanaṁ prati-padaṁ pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam
sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam**

“May the chanting of the Holy Names of Kṛṣṇa be all victorious throughout the universe. That chanting has the following seven-fold wonderful effects:

1. It cleanses the mirror of the heart.
2. Extinguishes the fire of misery in the forest of birth and death.
3. Just as the evening lotus blooms in the moon’s cooling rays, the heart begins to blossom in the nectar of the Name.
4. And at last the soul awakens to its real inner treasure—a life of love with Kṛṣṇa.
5. The soul dives and surfaces again and again in the ever-increasing ocean of ecstatic joy.
6. It gives the full taste of pure nectar at every utterance of the Holy Name.
7. All phases of the self of which we may conceive are fully satisfied, purified, and at last conquered by the all-auspicious influence of the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa.”

2

**nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ
etādṛṣṭī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam īdṛśam īhājani nānurāgaḥ**

“O my Lord, Your Holy Name bestows auspiciousness upon all. And You have unlimited names such as Kṛṣṇa and Govinda by which You reveal Yourself.

In Your many Holy Names You have kindly invested all Your transcendental potency. And in chanting these Names, there are no strict rules concerning time or place.

Out of Your causeless mercy, You have descended in the form of divine sound, but my great misfortune is that I have no love for Your Holy Name.”

3

**trnād api sunīchena
taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena
kīrtanīyah sadā hariḥ**

“One who is humbler than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree, who gives due honour to others without desiring honour for himself, is qualified to always chant the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa.”

4

**na dhanāṁ na janaṁ na sundarīṁ
kavītāṁ vā jagadīśa kāmaye
mama janmani janmanīśvare
bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi**

“O Lord of the universe, I have no desire to accumulate wealth, followers, beautiful women, or salvation. My only prayer is for Your causeless devotional service, birth after birth.”

5

**ayi nanda-tanuja kiṅkaram
patitam mām viṣame bhavāmbudhau
kr̥payā tava pāda-paṅkaja-
sthita-dhūlī-sadṛṣaṁ vichintaya**

“O son of Nanda Mahārāj, I am Your eternal servant, yet because of my own *karma*, I have fallen into this terrible ocean of birth and death. Accept this fallen soul and consider me a particle of dust at Your holy lotus feet.”

6

**nayanaṁ galad-aśru-dhārayā
vadanam̄ gad-gada-ruddhayā girā
pulakair nichitam̄ vapuh̄ kadā
tava nāma-grahaṇe bhaviṣyati**

“O Lord, when will tears flow from my eyes like waves and my voice tremble in ecstasy? When will the hairs of my body stand on end while chanting Your Holy Name?”

7

**yugāyitam̄ nimeṣena
chakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitam̄
śūnyāyitam̄ jagat sarvam̄
govinda-viraheṇa me**

“O Govinda! Without You, the world is empty. Tears are flooding my eyes like rain, and a moment seems like forever.”

āśliṣya vā pāda-ratāṁ pinaṣṭu mām
adarśanān marma-hatāṁ karotu vā
yathā tathā va vidadhātu lampaṭo
mat-prāṇa-nāthas tu sa eva nāparah

“Kṛṣṇa may embrace me in love or trample me under His feet. He may break my heart by hiding Himself from me. Let that debau-chee do whatever He likes, but He will always be the only Lord of my life.”



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