

Guidance

by

*His Divine Grace
Om Viṣṇupād Śrīla Bhakti
Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj*

4

All Glory to Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga

GUIDANCE

*Compiled based on the discourses emanating from
the heart of Ananta-śrī-vibhūṣita Om Viṣṇupād
Paramahāṁsa-kula-chūḍāmaṇi Viśva-vareṇya
Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj*

— { Volume 4 } —



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Brahmā–Madhva–Gaudīya Sampradāya

(Our Disciplic Succession)



— { Praṇām-mantra } —

pūjya-śrī-guru-varga-vandita-mahābhāvānvitāyā sadā
paurvāparya-paramparā-prachalita-prājya-pramūrtakṛteḥ
bhakter nirmala-nirjharasya nibhṛtam saṁrakṣakam sādaram
vande śrī-gurudevam ānata-śirā āchārya-varyam nijam

"I bow my head in eternal obeisance to my Gurudev, the best of āchāryas, Śrīla Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj. He is the ever vigilant, stalwart guardian of the current of pure devotion—the devotion whose highest form flows from our most worshippable Śrī Rūpānuga Guru-varga in their exclusive dedication to Mahābhāv, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī."

prerakam prāchya-pāśchātya-siṣyānām bhakti-vartmani
bhakti-nirmalam-āchārya-svāminam praṇamāmy aham

"I offer my respectful obeisances to Swāmī Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya, who is energetically inspiring all Eastern and Western disciples on the path of pure devotion."





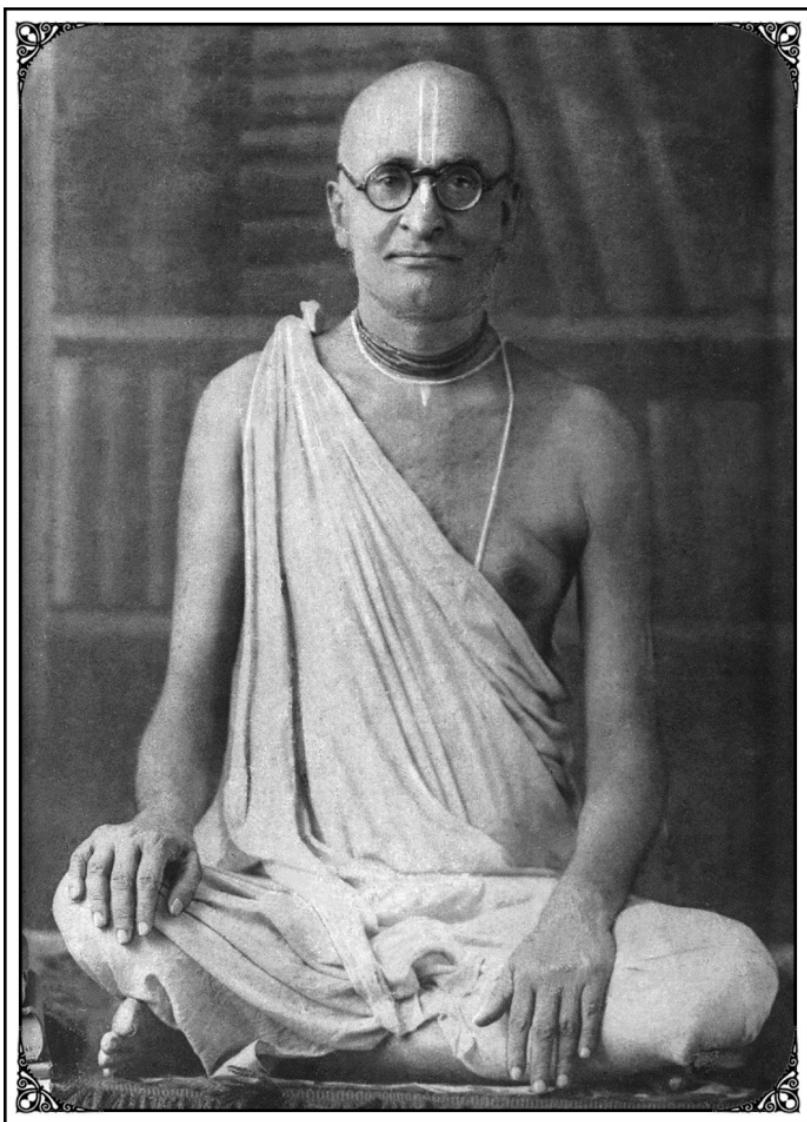
*Om Viṣṇupād Śrīla Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj,
the successor Sevāite-President-Āchārya of Śrī Chaitanya
Sāraswat Math, the present day holder of the current of pure
devotion in the line of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu*



*His Divine Grace Jagad-Guru Om Viṣṇupād
Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj,
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*His Divine Grace Jagad-Guru Om Viṣṇupād
Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj,
the Founder-Āchārya of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh*



Bhagavān Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākur Prabhupād,
the Founder-Āchārya of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭh and the modern age
reviver of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's movement and conception.

Foreword

There have already been published the First, Second, and Third volumes of *Śrī Upadeś* (*Guidance*, Bengali editions) composed from the holy nectarean discourses (*hari-kathā*) emanating from the holy mouth of supremely worshippable Śrī Gurupādpadma, the current President-Āchārya of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Math Om Viṣṇupād Śrīla Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj. This fallen soul has got an opportunity to have the association of Śrīla Āchārya Mahārāj during the preaching programmes at various festivals and in various villages. At these spiritual gatherings His Divine Grace shed light on the holy guidance of Bhagavān Śrī Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sāraswati Ṭhākur, the preserver of Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇav *sampradāya* and the establisher of the worldwide preaching of *śrī-bhakti-siddhānta-vāṇi* (the teachings of pure devotional conception), as well as the holy discourses of the Founder-Āchārya of this holy Math Om Viṣṇupād Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhāra Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj and the *hṛt-karṇa-rasāyana kathā* (discourses that are pleasing to the ear and heart) of my Śrī Param Gurudev, the Sevāite-Āchārya of this holy Math, Om Viṣṇupād Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj.

Today, on this *gaura pūrṇimā* full moon day, is the appearance day of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, mercy incarnate. Worshipping this supremely auspicious day that awards liberation and desiring the purification of his soul, this engulfed in ignorance soul has expressed his desire to publish the fourth volume of *Śrī Upadeś* based on the holy talks emanating from the lotus mouth of Śrī Gurupādpadma. Therefore, this holy book contains many spiritual solutions that warrant auspiciousness. The readers

seeking spiritual benefit will surely obtain satiation of their hunger and feel nourished and satisfied by the subject matters contained herein.

O *adosa-daraśī* readers (who do not see faults in others)! It is my prayer that you may please forgive my being unqualified in the matters of publishing, my lack of attachment to the service of devotees of supremely merciful Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nityānanda, as well as all the mistakes and errors that have polluted this holy book.

Humbly,
the very poor and low,
Publisher (of the original Bengali edition)

Guidance

• Volume 4 •

*Nectarean all-auspicious discourses
emanating from the holy lotus mouth of*

*Ananta-śrī-vibhūṣita Oṁ Viṣṇupād
Paramahaṁsa-kula-chūḍāmaṇi Jagad-Guru
Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj*

All glory to Śrī Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga

Śrī Śrīla Guru Mahārāj’s Guidance (Upadeśāvalī)

**Service to Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar is the highest
engagement on the path of kīrtan**

Our revered Śrīla Guru Mahāraj told Śrīla Gurudev, “You have a very beautiful voice, there is sweetness in your *kīrtan*, but *kīrtan* should be sung with heart and soul.” If you can pour out your whole being into *kīrtan*, then it must be auspicious. When you chant *kīrtan* for His happiness with heart and soul, Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar becomes very happy. It excites, agitates Him. The Deity is so magnanimous, so merciful to you all—He lives here under the name ‘Śrī Gāndharvikā Govindasundar’. He bestows His mercy onto so many souls, attracts so many souls. He is changing the destiny of so many people. So many people see His wonderful sweet and enchanting form and sit in front of Him in the temple, mesmerised. His lustrous beauty arises in the hearts of these fortunate souls and illuminates them.

The most proper service to Śrī Govindajī is performed following the path of *kīrtan*. There are three types of *kīrtan*. *Kīrtan* can be chanted with *karatāls* and *mṛdaṅga*, together with many people, for the satisfaction of the Lord—this kind of *kīrtan* is common, everybody can understand it. When one gives a class, it is also *kīrtan*. When one gives a class or a lecture, one performs *kīrtan* that charms and attracts the Lord’s heart. If someone speaks about the glories (*kīrtan*) of His Name, form, qualities, pastimes, associates, etc. they also serve Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar (practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness). And when someone runs ‘*bṛhat mṛdaṅga*’ and publishes holy devotional books with the help of a printing press,

they also engage in the *kīrtan* of the Lord. When you chant *kīrtan* with *karatāls* and *mṛdaṅga*, it is constrained to one place, but in *bṛhat mṛdaṅga kīrtan*, the Lord's word is spread in many countries, in many places. Our revered Śrīla Prabhupād mostly engaged in *kīrtan* through giving lectures and the *bṛhat mṛdaṅga*, as a result of which the message of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar spread all over India and even abroad. Hearing Śrīla Prabhupād's *kīrtan* of the Lord of his heart, Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar became moved. Śrīla Prabhupād worshipped Him through *kīrtan*—with his whole being. He is so merciful, so compassionate—his writing style is wonderful. Śrīla Prabhupād mostly engaged in the latter two types of *kīrtan*—he sang *kīrtans* very rarely. Perhaps, the tune and rhythm were not there, that is why not many people actually heard him sing *kīrtan*. Very few of those who are still with us have heard Śrīla Prabhupād sing. Except for his intimate dear associates, not many have heard this type of *kīrtan* from his mouth. Saying this and being overwhelmed by the intense feelings, Śrīla Guru Mahārāj cries with his heart filled with tears... *Kīrtan* awakens service to Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar and the highest Deity of Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nityānanda.

yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ

"Those who are intelligent will worship the Lord though sari-kīrtan-yajña."

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11.5.32)

Those who are intelligent, who are diplomatic and expert will always worship Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar through *kīrtan*. Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād composed many holy books and poems in Sanskrit and worshipped the Lord through that—he showed devotees and practitioners the path to practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Sanātan Goswāmīpād, Śrīla Jīva Goswāmīpād also worshipped Lord Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar through such *kīrtan*—they too composed holy books. Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur's line appeared

after their appearance. Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur and Śrīla Prabhupād mostly preached with heart and soul, they gave their entire being to preaching the message of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar: “*Namaste gaura-vāñī-śrī-mūrtaye dīnatāriṇe*—I pay my obeisance to the embodiment of the message of Śrī Gaurasundar, to the rescuer of fallen souls.” There are many gurus everywhere, but such embodiment of happiness in service to Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar cannot be seen anywhere else. Mesmerised by the *kīrtan* of Śrīla Prabhupād, Śrī Śrī Govindasundar jīu appeared and stays now here.

Ideal of lustrous service of the Lord within the path of Deity worship

It is not true that the Lord cannot be served through the worship of His Deity. If you feed Him nice food, dress Him in nice clothes, decorate Him with nice ornaments, He becomes pleased. However, He becomes more pleased when He is worshipped by Gaidīya Vaiṣṇavs’ *kīrtan* rather than with His Deity worship. Śrīmān Prabhu has poured out his heart and soul for the service of Śrī Govindasundar jīu. Very old, frail and feeble, he is continuing to serve his dearmost Lordship. How much enthusiasm he has in his service—this service is his very life. His Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar takes very nice preparations—the Lord is so happy to eat them. Charmed by Prabhu’s serving heart, the Lord accepts service from Śrīmān Prabhu and feels grateful and fortunate. There is no dirt in him—his inner chamber is completely clean. So many people laugh at him and ridicule him, so many people bully him (“Oh, you have given me so little milk!”), so many people fight with him; but there are very few Vaiṣṇavs like Śrīmān Prabhu. When I see him, I feel a great joy. I like him a lot. All the abuse and praise cannot touch him. He only serves his beloved Lordships with heartfelt love, he takes

no rest, he is never lax in his service. How beautiful this is! How great this is! Saying this, Śrīla Guru Mahāraj again cries being overwhelmed by the intense feelings.

Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar is much happier with the worship through *kīrtan* than *archan*

Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar is much more pleased with the worship through *kīrtan* rather than His Deity worship (*archan*). Many chant *kīrtan* to impress others, but this is very unlikely to bring any particular benefit. If there is audience, one is happy to give a class, make a speech, sing a *kīrtan* or to dance; they do not think much about the happiness of the object of their adoration. Whether there is audience or not, the Lordships can hear you. He is ‘*priya-śravā*’ and ‘*sruta-śravā*’ (He loves listening, He is the best listener). Those who chant *kīrtan* striving to please the Lord, become the most benefitted. If there is nobody to hear it, it is even better because your dearmost beloved is alone there. Just as when a wife serves her husband, does everyone see that service? “Look, look! Look how I am serving my husband!”—a chaste or a virtuous wife will never do it like this. In the exactly same way, true loving servants do not serve Śrī Gaurasundar so that others can hear or see it. I do not chant the Holy Name to impress anyone; in the same way I will give a class, I will chant *kīrtan*, I will dance—for *Him*, so that *He* hears it. This must bring a very quick result. This is a 100% truth. If you serve the Lord according to your qualification, you will progress on the path of devotion very quickly. Some are good at collecting (begging). “Even if you give me two rupees, I will serve the Lord with it”—the Lord is happy with this. Some bring money, but they keep that money meant for service for themselves—this brings inauspiciousness. It is necessary to immerse yourself into the ocean of service extracting mellows of heartfelt love from your heart. Śrīman

Prabhu does not have any sense of day or regime—he only serves, his life being fulfilled through that service. Whether somebody comes or does not come, he carries on with his service until ten-twelve at night. His pen carries on writing. Śrīmān Prabhu chants *kīrtans* in the morning—whether somebody comes or not, he continues chanting *kīrtans*. If somebody comes, good; if nobody comes, there is no loss—he continues chanting *kīrtan* for his Lord. Śrīla Prabhupād often said, “Whether somebody does service or *kīrtan* of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar or not, it does not matter, but I will do it.”

Śrīmān Prabhu cooks so much and feeds the Lordships, but he himself never takes even a drop of that *prasād*: he tells everyone to distribute that *prasād*. He gives it to everyone, but does not take any himself. He says, “I will become greedy.” What a great Vaiṣṇav he is! You can understand it from this article.



Firm determination is the means of progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness

This morning, Śrī Śrīla Guru Mahārāj observed Śrīpād Prabhu and said: I had pulled you out at a turning point in your life, but because you had taken a wrong decision, your spiritual life was almost destroyed. If you had gone straight at that time (if you had disregarded the sense of duty and had come here instead), then your life would have taken another turn. Your mother, wife, children are demoniac monsters (*Māyā-rākṣasī*). She can be a mother, but she eats flesh and drinks her children's blood. Your children are growing up and your health is going down. Because of this, your material bondage has become even thicker. You have heard something about Śrīman Mahāprabhu's message—you could not enjoy a family life like a full-fledged materialist, and you left Śrī Śrīman Mahāprabhu's service—you could not immerse yourself completely into either of it.

He noted to Śrīpād Prabhu: One must have an enormous fortune to be able to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One cannot serve the Lord with just a little bit of fortune. Many come to the temple, but after a few days they give up Kṛṣṇa consciousness and leave. Then it can be understood that they did not have enough good fortune. There is much untoward behaviour at the temple—taking ganja, insulting others, kicking others, beating others with a broom, not giving enough food, etc.—all this creates an uncomfortable, troublesome environment. Many become swayed at this point and give up Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then we must understand that such people have not got a strong faith. No matter what kind of misbehaviour, abuse, scolding, insult comes, "*myāya chhodūmingā nehi*"—I am holding on to Your feet, O Lord,

I will not leave Your service. Whatever comes, even if I am not given food, whatever insult is hurled at me, I will never leave Your service. I have come to the house of my guru—where else can I go?" Here, Śrīla Guru Mahāraj spoke about the beginning of his life at the Math, "When I first came to the Math, nobody gave me any honour, they never even fed me. I often visited some influential man, and they even tried to beat him. Even then I did not leave the temple. Whatever happens, happens, I will not give up your service, Prabhu. I have had this determination from the beginning, that is why all this ill-treatment could not affect me. The enemies within me are stronger than all these external enemies. Internal enemies are a lack of faith, slacking in service. 'I am being ill-treated, I have stayed at the temple and I see that it is useless—I will go and get married again. I have seen the fun here, let me now go and see the fun of married life.' We have seen so many souls in the zoo. So many *jīva* souls come to the temple after they get married, but seeing the problems here at the temple, I think I better live a family life. Also, many come at a young age and after a few days they decide to get married—they go back home, get married and again sink into material life. Just as in the zoo all kinds of birds chirp and screech, and monkeys grimace showing their teeth, in the same way material desires obstruct one's practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Guru Mahāraj told Śrīpād Prabhu: You have been given a separate room. They have given you respect, honour, received you cordially, but if one day you do not get such respectful treatment, you will have to sleep in the *nātya-mandir*; if you are sick, nobody will give you medication—then you say that this is abuse and you will leave Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When Gurudev chastises me or somebody insults me, I leave Kṛṣṇa consciousness—will you show such mood?"

I do not particularly chastise or discipline anyone because there are no suitable disciples who can be chastised. If I get some

position here, if I am flattered, then I will stay at the temple; and when you are severely rebuked, you will say, "That is it. *Danḍavat*." If Gurudev does not like me, then what more is there for me to hope for? He chastises me, he hates me, then what is the use staying at the temple? Śrīla Prabhupād said, "Everyone is my guru, I have no disciples." That is why he never chastised anyone. I too; even if I have chastised someone, I do not remember it. Also, if I chastise someone, it can offend them. That is why I do not chastise anyone.

'I have taken a guru, but I will not accept his chastisement'—then you can understand that this is not a disciple. There is a seed of spiritual benefit planted within chastisement.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj told Śrīpād Prabhu: "If somebody gives you mouth, kicks you, beats you with a broom, what will you do?" He replied, "By your mercy I have understood that but for you we have no other way. Where will I go? What will I do? Even if I ruin my life, I will still stay at the house of my guru."

Śrīpād Prabhu asked, "Is there no way for me? If you give me your mercy, then my mother, my wife can leave me." Śrīla Guru Mahārāj said humbly, "Do I have the power to give mercy? They will leave you, but you will not be able to leave them. That is the profound truth."

One more thing also should be said about the spiritual experience within Śrīpād Prabhu's *kīrtan*. His *kīrtan* (glorification of the Lord) is two-four words, like an expression of the Vedas. His *kīrtan* may not be a literary or a poetic masterpiece, but there is heart in it, there is realisation and spiritual experience in it. His Vaiṣṇav qualities manifested through it. At the time of śrī *guru-pūjā*, poems come from a hundred sides all around, but most of these poems have no spiritual experience, there is no feeling in them. However, among all the writings, his *kīrtan* stands out as it contains both feeling and spiritual experience.

A bad day is a day without Śrī Hari-kathā

Śrī Śrīla Gurudev said: It has been raining today continuously since 4 o'clock, all we have been hearing is the pitter-patter. Morning shows the day, but a cloudy day is not a bad day. Śrīla Prabhupād used to say, "A bad day is the day when you cannot hear Hari-kathā. If some day you could not serve Śrī Śrī Hari-Guru-Vaiṣṇavs and speak Hari-kathā, that day is a bad day for you." In our life also, the worst period or the worst day is the day or period that is not spent in Hari-kathā. When we have health, when we are young, when we have the opportunity, at that time we spend our life on our house, family, earning money, business, farming, etc. When we live the best period of our life, we do not take advantage of the opportunity to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "I will practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness later. Serving the Lord can be done later"—people say such things. "Later" means in the future, but the future cannot be relied on. Whether I will die or live in the future, whether I will get an opportunity to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness or not, this is not certain. We can only rely on the present time. The best opportunity is at present time. Many came to the temple at a young age and started practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but later they again returned to their homes and started family life. Such people face unfortunate days and get into trouble. They go back home, return to farming, start peddling, raising children—did they have to undergo so much austerity at the temple? There is life filled with service to the Lord, service to Vaiṣṇavs at the temple—how beautiful this is! How much happiness there was. You must realise this some time. If you receive the *darśan* of a great soul or come in touch with

them but that moment passes and you lose the opportunity, you will regret it. When you receive some association or mercy of a great soul in your life, the desire to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to serve the Lord, must awaken within you one day. At present, this desire is suppressed—you are now spending the best period of your life on the temporary family life or material life, and when this opportunity is no more, then you will feel remorseful. Alas! I have wasted my life! I have fallen into material illusion and have spoilt my life. I have got such a valuable life! I have also got the association of great souls, but how unfortunate I am! I did not practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness when I had time. When you become old and no longer have the health, when at the end of life you have no strength of heart, no spirit, then even if you regret it, you still cannot proceed on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness any more. When you are young, you do not spare your life working hard at your shop to have a successful business, you do farming, earn money, bring up your children, wait on your wife, earn position and prestige. But money cannot take you across the ocean of material existence—you never remember or think about it when you are young. Then you start thinking that you are living your life quite independently now, but if you stay at the temple, you will have to be subservient to others. When you serve at the temple, you get scolded, kicked, beaten with a broom, you must get chastised by Śrī Guru-Vaiṣṇavs and live according to their instructions. You can become sick and nobody will give you medication, provide diet food, call a doctor, nurse you—when you become old, nobody will take care of you. You are able to work hard now, so they give you clothes, food, etc., but when you become invalid, will anyone care about you? If it is like this now, then what to speak of when you become immobile? This all increases illusion. People become tempted by Māyā (illusion) and they leave the temple and stop practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When you are young and have time, you are busy with keeping

your shop, working, running a household, and the path towards spiritual benefit becomes suspended in your life. You will be able to understand it one day, but when you do understand it, that opportunity to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness will be gone, and you will regret it. You have accumulated many ideas in the prime of your life, and when you become old you pass your days trying to cope with the pressure of all those ideas—and one day you die. Your life passes in vain—burning and burning with repentance, you will eventually fall dead.

Such thoughts, such feelings do not arise in those who have never got the association or mercy of great souls in their life. Such repentance does not come to those who have never served Śrī Hari-Guru-Vaiṣṇavs, who have never got their *darśan*, association or mercy, who have been merely worrying about food, things, house, children, etc. However, if you have at least once in your life got association of a great soul, one day you will feel deep remorse. Association of great souls is never wasted. Maybe today, maybe tomorrow, maybe next life, but memory about it must arise in you. “When the time was right, I did not serve Śrī Guru and the Lord”—this thought will come to your mind. When you lose capacity to serve, when you no longer have life, then you will only keep sighing, lamenting and crying out of disheartenment. But at that time you will have no way out.

It is necessary to exclusively serve the Lord and practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the prime of your life. Śrīla Bhaktisudhākar Prabhu used to say, “If you start practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness at forty, it is very hard to attain success because your bodily and mental power decreases, your senses are not as sharp, and diseases and pain harass the body and the mind. When you think about something your whole life, these false thoughts will keep on haunting your mind. You cannot leave these thoughts. If you start practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness after forty, you will not be able to progress very far.”

Śrīla Gurudev said: Now is your best period. You must engage yourself in the service of your guru and Vaiṣṇavs—if you have the fortune, you will attain fulfilment of your life. If you can stop looking for faults in Śrī Guru and Vaiṣṇavs, criticising their behaviour, showing disrespect and no faith towards them, and engage yourself in the service of Śrī Guru and Śrī Hari, then you will definitely attain perfection very quickly, in this very life. Just as you cannot make your business successful at eighty, you will not get so much opportunity to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness when you grow old. If you start a business at the beginning of your life, then you can progress very quickly—at an old age the progress cannot be as quick as when you are young; in the same way, you must engage yourself in pleasing the Lord and the guru from the beginning of your life. Fortunate and intelligent people start serving the Lord, Guru and Vaiṣṇavs from a young age. You have an opportunity, but you do not practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness—you have teeth, but you do not appreciate their value. You must embrace the opportunity to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness while you are still strong—it is particularly necessary to get Gurudev's *darśan*, association, mercy without delay. If you lose the opportunity to serve now, you must get ready—now you have a lot of opportunities, you can do so many things, but if you lose this opportunity, you will be full of repentance later. However, those who never get the association of great souls, never feel remorseful—such souls are in an even worse position. Their consciousness is not awakened. "I have food and all I need, I am worry free"—such people are in an even more unconscious, material state. If you have engaged yourself in the association of a genuine great soul, then one day or another you will feel that something is goading you. Great souls are so merciful, so favourable that even if you see that you are stupefied now, but the seed that this association has sown must sprout one day. If you somehow get such causeless mercy of great souls, then even if your health becomes spoilt, even if you get into trouble, even if you have

some difficulties, you will not leave Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Gurudev said: you have an opportunity but you did not practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Later you will heave deep sighs of regret. You have destroyed your best time, your best opportunity. Suppose you are caught by a tiger. There seems to be no possibility to get out, the tiger is going to eat you, but by the will of the Lord it does not eat you, but when you run from the clutches of a tiger, you fall into the clutches of a lion. When you have escaped from the clutches of a tiger, you must immediately start serving, start practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness; but instead of that, you again enter material life. If you get your health back, do you think you get it back to again enjoy material life? You got so ill that you were standing on the verge of death—you survived and did not die, but now you are again going back to your ghee shop and taking care of your brother's family? And some day later, you will also get married. What do servants of Śrī Śyām do? As soon as they get back their health, they serve the Lord.

Śrīla Gurudev asked one person, "Will you get married or will you practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Which do you choose?" The person replied, "I will not get married. I have decided to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness." Then Śrīla Gurudev asked him, "How old are you and how many years is it since you have come to the Maṭṭh?" The man said he was forty and that he came to the Maṭṭh when he was nineteen. Then Śrīla Gurudev said, "Oh? Now is the best time to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You have spent twenty-one year serving the temple, now you must practise with deep determination. 'I am a servant of my guru, I am a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa, I am a servant of Vaiṣṇavas'—engage yourself in service with this ego. I am not a servant of Māyā. When you firmly decide that no matter what happens, whether something good happens or bad, you know that this is the path of your life. When your resolve is firm, you must be serious about your practising life. You will be tested, and you

must pass all tests. When children must take an exam, they study very hard—one way or another, but I must pass the exam. In the same way, you have come to the house of your guru to engage in practising life—staying at the house of your guru, you must try to get service to the Lord. You must wake up and engage yourself right away. Do not lose a moment more! No matter how, one way or another, you must fulfil your life.

Offending others, speaking bad about others, finding faults in others—these things are obstacles on the path of attaining your goal. If you do not commit these offences, you will certainly attain your goal.

kāhāre nā kare nindā, 'kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa' bale
ajeya chaitanya sei jinibeka hele

"Those who do not offend anyone and always chant the Holy Name of Lord Kṛṣṇa conquer unconquerable Lord Chaitanya Mahāprabhu."

(Śrī Chaitanya-bhāgavata, 2.10.312)

Many do much service at the Maṭh, but they also speak bad about others, they offend others—and all the result of their service goes through these holes. Many have many faults and many good qualities. Somebody's character is bad, somebody mixes with women, somebody eats too much, somebody goes here and there—what is the need of all these talks? What is it to us? We must not look at others' faults, hear about others' faults, and even if you see something, you must not speak about it. Our life must be dedicated to spiritual practice—we must submerge ourselves into hearing, chanting, and service. If you serve Guru and the Lord without speaking bad about others, without looking for others' holes, then you will see the result very quickly. If you talk bad about others, the result of your service will fall through the hole then. Those who mix with women commit a sin, but sin does not obstruct devotion—but it does not bring progress

in one's devotional life. However, if you see that somebody is mixing with a woman and you blame or condemn the person for this, then you will be committing an offence—this does obstruct devotion, it uproots it, whereas sins do not uproot devotion, they just do not let the creeper of devotion grow.

There are many devotees at the temple—some do service, and some criticise and abuse others, and all result of their service comes out through this hole. Suppose you pour milk into a glass—if there is a hole in the glass, then all the milk will fall through the hole. Many criticise Vaiṣṇavs and as a result completely degrade morally. If you are constant in your service—if you orderly, methodically do your service, serve the Deities, then you will be promoted very quickly. If you do not see others' faults, you will progress so much. It cannot but be so, otherwise the whole science of devotion would be a lie. There are many examples of this—you show so much effort trying to serve, but everything only comes out through the holes. How unfortunate! Because of Vaiṣṇav *aparādhas* you are burning your fortune.

You must become determined in your life and serve the Lord unswervingly, in one way or another. I must cross the ocean of material existence this time. A good and very competent boat has come to me to take me across, I have also got the ticket for the boat, and this time I cannot but cross this ocean! If you take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness with such strongest determination, you will be rescued from this material world.

Śrīla Gurudev said: You have arranged for the service to Śrī Śrīman Mahāprabhu by looking after and donating all your land and property for His service. It takes more than a little fortune to make such an offering. This is very good. However, this is not the end. It is not enough to only offer some material things or money. You must give your very self for the service of the Lord. You must serve the Lord exclusively.

Real Practice Is Possible Only If You Have Sincerity

If your unwanted habits (*anarthas*) are strong, you cannot be sincere or fixed in practising life. The weaker the unwanted elements within you are, the more sincerity and determination you have for your practising life. If your practice is strong, then there will be no looseness in the actions you perform with your body (eating, sleeping, bathing, etc.). You keep an eye on your bodily functions to protect your deep interest in your service. For example, if you take khichudi, etc. at a festival and the next day have diarrhoea, this will obstruct your practising life and you will not be able to do your service. It is necessary to eat, sleep, and talk in moderation—not because you are engrossed in your body, but not to let your service to the Lord diminish. Enjoyers particularly keep a close eye on their body because if their health goes down, they will not be able to enjoy.

Sincere practitioners regulate their food, sleep, etc. following scriptural guidance—they eat, sleep, etc. but in moderation. If you ignore these things, it will disrupt your service. Maintaining your body is necessary to maintain your service. You will think that those who always eat timely, bathe timely, etc. are gross enjoyers (*dehārāmī*), but this is not so. All devotional practices are based on regulation of bodily functions. If your body is in a good state, then your service will also be in a good state. Otherwise everything will be disrupted.

Because of your body and mind, it is always difficult to maintain sincerity in service. If you have other desires or material

desires, you will not be able to do your service following the scriptural guidance. When there is any distress, sadness in your mind, if your mind attacks you, or if you have quarrelled with someone, your mind becomes agitated—as a result, your service is disturbed. For example, you fight with someone and then refuse to distribute *prasādam*. These are internal obstacles. If your mind is disturbed, if there is no peace in your mind, it will produce obstacles in your service.

Sincerity, being firm in one's service comes after one's unwanted elements are removed. When these unwanted elements become light, you become steadier in your practising life, and if you have many unwanted elements, your practising life will decrease. If you dance and cry a lot one day, the next day you will be silent. One day you dance and chant, the next day you do not. If that is the case, then you can understand that you are not firm in your practice, you do not practice with sincerity (*niṣṭhā*). Those who serve sincerely do their service steadily.

“raghunāthera niyama,—yena pāṣāṇera rekhā”

“Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī’s strict regulative principles were like lines on a stone (he never wavered in observance of regulative principles).”

(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, 3.6.309)

Śrīla Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī followed all prescribed regulations (recited mantras, paid obeisances, worshipped his Deity, followed the word of the scriptures, circumambulated Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa) every day—his practices were as unwavering as lines on a stone; and he did everything out of deep love. Sincere practitioners do not have many unwanted elements within them.

Anarthas (unwanted elements) decrease by the mercy of Gurudev and, as a result of his association, one is able to engage in devotional practises following the prescribed rules. Just as materialists go to the office every day, or students go to school

every day, in the same way it is necessary to be steady, regular in your practising life. What is your office? What is your school? You should be steady in practising devotional life. You must carry out your practising life with the same perseverance that you show when you voluntarily take on austerities to achieve some goal.

One day you listen to Hari-kathā, another day you do not. This is characteristic of a lower class devotee. Coming to hear from time to time, coming to see the ārati from time to time—you will not get much benefit through this. But coming sometimes is better than not coming at all. The more you progress in your practising life, the steadier you become. Being ‘steady’ (*nishṭhā*) means your unwanted elements are diminishing. When you serve Deities, it is even more necessary to be steady and regular in your practice. Being regular and steady is very important for those who cook for Deities and worship Deities. You cook one day and do not cook the next day, then the Deity has to fast. If you cannot cook yourself, you can get someone to cook then or buy something ready-made, it is much better than not to cook at all. You will not get much benefit through desultory* practice. Those who have reached such steadiness cry with their whole being, “My service will suffer!”—they feel sad at this thought. You must continue your service until the last moment. We see in the material world that even when a mother has a fever, she still cooks rice for her son—this is a symptom of love.

When you become steady in your service, you will feel happy doing your service, “I like singing *kīrtans*,” “I like giving class,” “I like serving *prasādam* to others.” This is not just a chore or a routine work. If there is some work at the temple, I must do it otherwise why will they feed me and let me stay? You must not serve out of

*Desultory—lacking a plan, purpose, or enthusiasm; going randomly from one activity to another, from one subject to another in a half-hearted way.

such feeling. When you become steady in your practice, you will do your service with love and affection. If you like serving *prasādam* to others, you will feel joy doing it. *Ruchi*, taste, comes from steadiness. And there is one more thing. Different devotees have different services, but everyone must be steady in whatever service they are given. Whatever service you do, do not do it in a desultory way. Only when steadiness arises can one practise pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you are steady and firm, you will be successful in your practising life, then you will think that service is joyful—and He whom you are serving, will also be joyful.



Serve According To Your Qualification

Śrī Śrīla Gurudev asked one Prabhu, “You have made a sincere offering, what do you want to do now?”

Prabhu said, “What else is there to do now? I have no physical strength, I will stay at the temple, hearing and chanting the Holy Name—I do not even hope for that.”

Śrīla Gurudev said, “Can you live in your old age like a young man? Time and body exist according to their own religion (*kāla-dharma, śarīr-dharma*), how can you prevent old age? If you go to some other place to practise *śravaṇ* and *kīrtan*, will that other land not be flooded? If you stay at another place, will you not have difficulty maintaining it?”

Prabhu said, “If I do not stay at home, who will look after it? There is nobody else at home. I want to stay in the temple, in the holy *dhām*, but if I stay in the temple, I will not be able to do any service—better if I stay at home and take care of the land, then I can collect something and give it to the temple. Except for this, I cannot do anything now.”

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj said, “Doing service is good. When people stay at the temple, as you say, just hearing and chanting the Holy Name, they often become lazy. If you have some objective, that is good. Practitioners should take to their objectives seriously. You should steady your intelligence and stay within one line, and stay there seriously. I do not know what to do, what not to do—you are not firmly fixed in your objective then, and this is not right. If your goal is clear, then you will progress towards it quickly in your life. This is good, and this will bring you benefit.”

This benefit has come to you as a result of your sincere offering.

“sve sve ‘dhikāre yā niṣṭhā sa guṇah parikīrtitah

“If you are firmly fixed in your own rightful position, this quality brings real piety.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11.21.2)

Everyone has different qualities, and it is good if everyone serves according to their capacity. Whatever position you may be in, whatever mental and bodily previously acquired position you may be placed in, it is good if you can practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness from there. This is individual practising life. It is good if you live according to your capacity or previously acquired nature. If somebody wants to become a writer or a speaker like Śrī Vrajendra-nandan, this is wrong. Whatever you are, you must understand your nature and run your life with it. Many of those who stay at the temple think that if they do not get *sannyās*, then their life passes in vain. This is an *anartha* (inauspicious element). Be who you are and try to gradually increase your practising life. Sincere practitioners are serious and contemplative about all this—this is the trick in their practising life, this is the wisdom and prudence they exercise in their practising life.

Suppose those who cook decide they want to chant *kīrtans* instead—then there will be a problem. On the order of Śrī Gurudev, somebody worships the Deities, somebody gives class, somebody studies, somebody writes holy books, etc. Whatever service your guru gives you, if you do it religiously, with steadiness and sincerity, it will give you a good result. If you get taste (*ruchi*) for the service Gurudev orders you to do, that is good. Many have taste for the position of the Maṭh’s manager because when you become a manager, you can boss others, you can spend money as you wish, you can come and go as you please—that is why people feel taste for the position of a manager, but this is a wicked taste. Your despotic ego has not gone away yet, but you want to be

a temple manager—if you have such taste, then you are digging your own grave. Those who have no ego, who do not have any despotic ego of a master, who are very gentle and sweet, who behave and practise properly following the etiquette—if the Guru or Vaiṣṇavs give such people responsibility of running a temple, then they should do it. “I want this”—this is an *anaratha* (unwanted, inauspicious), this is a problem. I want to go on collection, I want to become the manager of the temple, I want to give class, I want to become a *sannyāsī*—this is all bad and disruptive. At the same time, thinking, “I do not want to be the manager of the temple, but Guru-Vaiṣṇavs tell me to be the manager”—this is also bad, this is also a problem. Whether you want it or not, if you have the capacity, you must serve according to your capacity. To stay in line in one’s practising life it is necessary to align one’s desires with one’s own capacity or qualification. If I want to study Sanskrit now, it will be wrong—if Gurudev tells me to give a class, then I must give a class. I do not have the qualification, but I want to become the manager of the temple, I want to give a class—this is all disruptive.

Also, whether I am qualified or not, if Gurudev orders me to do something, I must do it without any consideration. If I decide not to do the service thinking about my qualification or a lack of it, this is wrong. Many of those who stay at the temple want to become managers. Suppose there is a devotee who does not want to be the manager of the Math and a devotee who wants to be the manager of the Math—both positions are bad. One is given the service but he does not take it; the other one has no qualification to do the service but he wants to do it. Both are bad. If your thinking is not peaceful, steady, and firm, if such quality has not come to you, then where is your qualification to be the manager of the temple? If you do what Guru and Vaiṣṇavs tell you without any consideration, you will get an immediate benefit. I am not a musician, but I want

to be a musician; I am not a singer, but I want to be a singer; I am not a speaker, but I want to become one—these are all '*anyābhilāṣītā*' (other desires). Whatever qualification you have, live your life with that. If you are not steady within your qualification, then other desires will come. "I want to be in charge of a certain department"—many of temple servitors have this fault; and when they are not put in charge of a department, they lose their service enthusiasm. These things obstruct service. This is transgression of one's rights. "Do whatever Gurudev tells you to do"—such desire is good. Religion of Vaiṣṇavas is *ānugatya*, i.e. strict adherence, loyalty. When the Guru and Vaiṣṇavas see this loyalty in someone, they become happy. You always look forward and wait for an order from Gurudev, and when it comes you must carry it out with joy and without any judgement. Following the guru's order is a shortcut in one's practising life. According to your discretion, you are qualified to do what you want to do, but that is yet to be seen. The safest way is not to want anything. You are peeved inside and want to be the manager, and if you cannot become one, you say, "I am going home." If you have no faith, then what is the use staying at the temple? The greatest advantage is in adherence (*ānugatya*).

The first lesson those staying at the temple get is that they must follow the order of the Guru and Vaiṣṇavas. If you can follow their order happily, you will progress in your practising life quickly. Even if you cannot follow their order happily, you must follow it reluctantly—as long as you follow it; this too will bring you some benefit. If you follow their order going against your own wishes, it will bring you some benefit. However, if you cannot follow their order, this is bad.

Śrīla Gurudev told that Prabhu: your decision to make the selfless offering is beautiful. You can stay at home, serve by looking after the land and hold programmes. If you see somebody has some faith, call them to the programme. Then your house will

become a temple. If you live and practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness in such atmosphere, your spiritual life will progress. “O Lord! Do whatever You want.” If you practise in this way, without deceit and offences, He will reward you. He is not blind, neither He is a fool. The Lord is cleverer than anyone else. Therefore, seeing simple-heartedness, sincerity in someone, He becomes glad. It is not necessary to imitate anyone else. He will give the result to everyone according to their capacity, at the right time and place.

He does not give me *sannyās*, I have done so much service, I have given such a good class, I was not allowed to hold the *dāṇḍa*, I am wasting my life! This is extremely wrong. For example there is one Prabhu who is adamant about taking *sannyās*. It is not our ideal to become a *sannyāsī*. If they can appreciate my service, my qualification, then they must give me *sannyās*. If somebody wants to forcefully take *sannyās*, it creates disturbance. When we come to stay in the temple, *sannyās* is not our highest goal. If you do not get *sannyās*, do not be depressed. This is transgression of one’s rights. Many also think that first it is necessary to be saffron inside, then only can one take *sannyās*, but Gurudev wants to give *sannyās*. Me wanting to take *sannyās* is just as bad as me not wanting to take it. Both are *anarthas* (bad, unwanted elements)

Whatever comes from the Lord’s side, I will accept that. “I need this”—I have never said this in my life. I have never thought about it also. You can give me whatever You want, I do not pray for anything. I have placed this *śloka* in the reading room:

na dhanam na janam na sundarim kavitaam va jagadisa kāmaye
mama janmani janmanisvare bhavataad bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi
“*I do not want wealth, I do not want knowledge, I do not want beauty, I do not want to be a poet. I only want causeless devotion to Your lotus feet. Give me that kind of devotion to Your lotus feet so that I could do Your service life after life.*”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 3.20.29)

Unconditional service is the means to spiritual benefit

Service is the main goal in our life. Wherever you are—whether you live in a temple, in a house or in a forest, the only goal in life is to make the Supreme Lord Hari happy. We should be always ready to serve the Lord. We should have such an attitude, such a mood in our mind and heart. The Supreme Lord is unlimitedly happy, His thirst is satisfied through unlimited number of senses. What He wants is incomparable. How can I serve Him with my tiny power? From my side, it is absolutely impossible to come in touch with His service, full of variegated pastimes. However, from my side I should be ready to serve Him without any deceit, laziness or negligence. It is necessary to have eagerness and zest for service. As soon as you get an opportunity to do service, you must grab it quickly.

It is impossible to chant the pure Holy Name while being a practitioner or being covered with unwanted elements because the Lord is transcendental—there is no feeling of hatred, inferiority, lowliness on that plane; whereas a conditioned *jīva* soul is spurred by impure desires, lust, and its heart is full of dirt and garbage. In this impure state, it is impossible for me to do pure service to the transcendental plane. However, even being on this impure plane, being aware of my position, I am always trying or always have inclination towards pure service of the Supreme Lord. We must pray or appeal to the Lord for His pure service.

It is necessary to serve constantly. The Lord will accept this service or not, this is up to Him, but we must always be alert and ready to serve. If we need to get a job, we must keep submitting our application and always aspire to get the job. I do this and that service, and it is up to Him whether He accepts it or not.

Whether I become pure or not, such is my fortune. If I can do my service in a pure way, He will accept it—this is a 100% truth. If I can do my service purely, this will be my greatest fortune. My heart is dirty, therefore when I do some service, it is impure, so He is not accepting it—will I then leave my service? No. No matter what, you must never leave your service. Always keep on sending your application in a prayer form—pray for mercy, for help so that you can do pure service. From our side, it is necessary to try according to your practising level, to make an effort and to be intent on serving. The Lord is merciful—seeing your continuous attempts and effort, He must certainly reward your perseverance. Suppose you cooked for Him what He likes, but it did not turn out good because He did not accept it—"I cannot do it well, so I will not do it at all"—such mentality is a sign of bad fortune. This is self-deception or cheating. As much as I can do according to my level of practice, I will always try to do it well, I will never be lazy or try to cheat You. It is important to have such a mood. If I serve in such a mood, then I will be fortunate—pure service will come to me. "I will do as I can"—it is necessary to have enthusiasm, it is necessary to make an effort.

There is one happy thing in this regard. The Lord may be Goloka-pati (Master of Goloka), Vaikuṇṭha-pati (Master of Vaikuṇṭha) and may not accept any service from this limited world (Sakuṇṭha), but His servant (Gurudev) or Vaiṣṇavs accept faulty service. Although Śrī Gurudev and Vaiṣṇavs are transcendental, they act as a bridge between the Supreme Lord and conditioned souls, as a medium or a matchmaker. Although conditioned souls are not able to render pure service that would befit the transcendental world, if they bring their somewhat dirty and bad service to Gurudev, he will not reject it. The Supreme Lord will not accept my things because they are not clean, but His dear servant Śrī Gurudev accepts such service because he is very

merciful and forgiving towards the *jīva* souls. Even if the service is not completely pure, he will accept it not to frustrate the *jīva* soul's effort, enthusiasm and drive for service. Not to disturb the *jīva* souls' enthusiasm, Gurudev accepts their a little adulterated, a little dirty, a little faulty service. Śrī Guru-Thākur is empowered with the mercy of Śrī Hari-Thākur—because his position is such, because he stands in-between the Supreme Lord and the conditioned soul, he takes even the service that is tarnished by *anarthas* (bad elements). This is a fact. That is why, when a *jīva* soul is covered with unwanted elements, it is more important or necessary to serve Śrī Guru-Thākur rather than Śrī Hari-Thākur. Suppose you gave the Lord something to eat—whether He accepted it or not, you were not able to understand it or you were not able to feel it. However, if you give Gurudev something to eat, he will eat it, you can see it. You may not have been able to offer it to him in the way he likes it, this is true; but he accepted it, this is true too. This is the distinctive peculiarity of Śrī Gurudev.

It is not true that Śrī Gurudev likes dirty, adulterated, and faulty service, but if the service is rendered by a soul covered with *anarthas*, there must be deficiency in it. Seeing my fault, deficiency, mistake, etc. he will not reject me. If he rejects such service, then it would be impossible to create a servant. Then Śrī Hari-Thākur would suffer the loss. Therefore, Śrī Gurudev creates servants from contaminated people, and that is why he is extremely merciful. He accepts my impure service, he does not kick me out or reject me; but if you keep doing impure, deficient service, then it means you are taking advantage of his causeless mercy. Then you must remember that his mercy too has its limit. If you carry on doing this with deceit, with wicked mentality, then you will be accumulating offences—eventually you will end up being freed from practising life.

A sincere practitioner has impurity, you must not be discouraged by that. Śrī Gurudev will wash you, scrub you and

make you pure, this is true. However, a practitioner must slowly, slowly correct his mistakes and shortcomings. Suppose you are told to do shopping at the market, but you steal the money you are given. Those who carry on with such thievish mentality, are making offences. Stealing the money meant for the Lord service leads to an offence. A sincere practitioner should not do this. There is a limit to Śrī Gurudev's tolerance and forgiveness—if you overstep this limit, you will be in trouble.

I cannot do the service properly, so I give it up—what I am doing is wrong and inauspicious, but I will carry on in this inauspicious manner forever. Such mentality is also bad. Such situation does come to the life of a practitioner. Because different practitioners are situated on different levels, such mentality can arise. Śrī Gurudev accepts impure things, this is true, but if Śrī Gurudev sees that the practitioner's effort is not impure—that there is no defect in the effort, the effort is sincere—then it will bring a great advantage. When such a stage comes when you practise, you can refer to your Gurudev and he will tell you how to rectify your mistakes and shortcomings and will give you much encouragement. I will not get a response from the Supreme Lord as I try to proceed down the path of my practising life, but His representative Śrī Gurudev will give response—he will point out my mistakes and deficiencies and will show the strategy how to rectify them.

This does not mean that you go past the Supreme Lord. If a guru avoids the Supreme Lord, he is called a *guru-māyā* (illusion in the form of a guru). We are not talking about such gurus. A mother is very important for a child—without a mother, a child cannot live even a moment. In the same way, Gurudev's association, mercy, blessing, guidance are extremely important in the life of a practitioner.

Chaste service brings quick progress in practising life

Revered Śrī Śrīla Guru Mahārāj asked one Prabhu, “What do you like?” Prabhu replied, “I like singing along at the *kīrtans*.” Śrī Śrīla Guru Mahārāj: “What else can you do?” Prabhu said, “I want to offer some money, etc.” Śrī Śrīla Guru Mahārāj: “If you try and see whether you can lead *kīrtan* or not, you can give yourself a trial. You have some qualification, you have enthusiasm for a particular activity—give your proper attention to such activity and you will get full benefit through that. There are nine practices of devotion—śravan (hearing), *kīrtan* (chanting), *smaraṇ* (remembering), *archan* (Deity worship), etc.—if you practise any one of them, you can attain your destination.

eka aṅga sādhe, keha sādhe bahu-aṅga
 eka aṅge siddhi pāila bahu bhakta-gaṇa
 ambarīṣādi bhaktera ‘bahu’ aṅga-sādhana

“Some practise one devotional process, some practise many. There are many devotees who practised only one of the nine processes and many devotees who practised many processes (Ambarish Mahārāj and others)—all of them got ultimate success.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.22.134-135)

śrī-viṣṇoḥ śravaṇe parīkṣid abhavad vaiyāsakilī kīrtane
 prahlādaḥ smaraṇe tad-aṅghri-bhajane lakṣmīḥ pṛthuh pūjane
 akrūras tv abhivandane kapi-patir dāsye ‘tha sakhye ‘rjunaḥ
 sarvasvātma-nivedane balir abhūt kṛṣṇāptir eṣāṁ parā

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.22.136, Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.265)

"Mahārāj Parīkṣit attained the highest perfection (divine love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa) simply by hearing about Lord Viṣṇu. Śukadeva Goswāmī attained perfection simply by reciting Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Prahlād Mahārāj attained perfection by remembering the Lord. The goddess of fortune attained perfection by massaging the transcendental feet of Mahā-Viṣṇu. Mahārāj Pṛthu attained perfection by worshipping the Deity, and Akrūra attained perfection by offering prayers unto the Lord. Hanumān attained perfection by rendering service to Lord Rāmachandra, and Arjuna attained perfection simply by being Kṛṣṇa's friend. Bali Mahārāj attained perfection by dedicating everything to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa." But devotees headed by Śrī Ambarish Mahārāj attained divine love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa by practising many devotional processes:

sa vai manah kṛṣṇa-padāravindayor vachāṁsi vaikuṇṭha-guṇānuvarṇane
 karau harer mandira-mārjanādiśu śrutim chakārāchyuta-sat-kathodaye
 mukunda-liṅgālaya-darśane dṛśau tad-bhṛtya-gātra-sparaśe'ṅga-saṅgamam
 ghrāṇam cha tat-pāda-saroja-saurabhe śrīmat-tulasyā rasanāṁ tad-arpite
 pādau hareḥ kṣetra-padānusarpaṇe śiro hrṣīkeśa-padābhivandane
 kāmam cha dāsyे

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 9.4.18-20)

"Ambarish Mahārāj always engaged his mind in meditating at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, his words in describing the transcendental world, his hands in cleansing the Lord's temple, his ears in hearing topics about the Supreme Lord, his eyes in seeing the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa, his body in touching the bodies of Kṛṣṇa's servants (embracing them, touching their lotus feet, etc.), his nostrils in smelling the aroma of the lotus flowers offered at the feet of Kṛṣṇa, his tongue in tasting the Tulasi leaves offered to Kṛṣṇa, his legs in going to holy places of pilgrimage, his head in offering obeisance at the lotus feet of the Lord, and his desires in serving the Lord, i.e. he always engaged himself in attaining servitude to the Lord."

If you have a natural taste for a particular practice, you must encourage yourself to practise it. However, when there are *kirtans* being sung, what will you do? Some like going for collection, but when there is no collection going on, what will you do? Will you spend the rest of the time in sluggishness, talking nonsense, or criticising others? You should spend as much time as possible doing what you have more taste for, but at all other time you should take advantage of other activities. Downright laziness is not good.

Some like worshipping Deities, some are enthusiastic to dress the Deities; but what if your *guru-varga* does not want it? What if instead of worshipping Deities they give you collection service which you do not like? Even if you are not happy, not enthusiastic to do it, if you do not like doing it, when the order of *guru-varga* comes to do a certain thing, you must do it without any hesitation or consideration. Many keep on grumbling, keep on bolstering their atheistic mentality thinking "Why do they want me to do it? I do not like begging, I am not eager to do it, I cannot do it! Still, why do they want to send me to beg? I will not become a cooking pot, I will become a water pot!" When you say you like doing something, it can be affected by the bad elements covering you or by the desire to seek convenience. Therefore, you must give priority to what your *guru-varga* likes and is enthusiastic about—not to what the society is enthusiastic about. *Śrī Guru-varga* always see the Lord within everything. The Lord needs complete service—He wants you to serve in every capacity. Therefore, even if you may not like it, you can be told to cook or to go for collection. Practitioners have a narrow, provincial vision. Therefore, you must stop your own desires or preferences and give priority to the Lord's desires. I look at everything through my previously acquired nature, but *Śrī Gurudev* sees everything comprehensively. I like to stay in Kolkata, but he sends you to Ganga-sagar. You should not think

about material life. It will be good if you depend on the desires of *guru-varga*. This is favourable to devotion. When there is no opportunity to get a direct order or when no other instruction comes, then it is good if you engage yourself in the service according to your preference. When you stay at the temple, you have more chance to get a direct instruction than when you stay separately. Even when you stay in your house, you should follow Gurudev's direct instruction.

I want to write, I want to give a class, I want to go for collection. If you think that collection is very difficult, you have to wander around like a beggar, people force you to eat, etc. This is a lack of faith. Gurudev's service mood is all-comprehensive—he wants to do all types of service. If you do not do the collection service, then the Deities' service will be hampered—such thinking is wrong. Gurudev arranges everything for the service of the Lord to be complete (he wants the Lord to be served in every way). Therefore, those who are surrendered souls live by the desires of their Gurudev; and those who are not surrendered go against Gurudev's desire and nurture atheistic mentality within. You must submit your own desires and do what is favourable to fulfilling the desires of *guru-varga*.

Gurudev will send you to the right place, at the right time. This is his responsibility, not mine. Therefore, those who have such faith and properly follow his instruction are called sincere practitioners. If you cannot follow your guru's instruction, there are some reasons for that: (1) your independence; (2) you do not have sufficient faith that Gurudev wants your benefit; (3) you nurture your own other desires, etc.

Both those who live in the temple and who live in their house must open their hearts to Gurudev. When you come to a doctor, you tell him everything openly, in the same way a disciple must open himself to his Gurudev. If you open yourself, Gurudev will

see. It is good to tell Gurudev everything openly. I have seen very few practitioners who do not consider the problems in their spiritual practising life important—that is because there is deceit and other desires. There are very few of such practitioners even among those who live in the temple. If you have submitted and opened yourself to Gurudev, Gurudev will look after you. From the practitioners' side, they should open themselves—they should submit themselves fully. If you can live your life in strict adherence to your Gurudev, in surrender, giving everything up to him—this is the best.

Many come and start repeating, "Please give me your mercy," they pay *daṇḍavat pranām*, try to get close to you, talk to you about their material problems and achievements; they come to the Deities' room and ask the Deities for the things they want to get, they come to Gurudev also and ask him for some material things; but they never speak about the problems in their spiritual life. However, those who do speak about difficulties in their spiritual life are gainers of benefit—they gain Gurudev's sympathy. You say "*jay*", "*paramaharīsa*", try to get close, you offer obeisance, but what is your purpose behind it?

Śrīla Prabhupād used to say, "They are all my gurus"—i.e they do not have faith in their guru. They did not give importance even to such a guru as Śrīla Prabhupād. If sincere practitioners depend exclusively on their guru, they are very fortunate. They will certainly progress in their spiritual life very quickly. This is a trade secret of practising life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Many offer flowers and obeisance to photographs—they do it without heart and soul. They hope to get real spiritual benefit, but this is virtually impossible. Sincere practitioners should be very careful and make sure that when they do something in their practising life, they must do it with heart and soul.

Gradation of devotional practice: the practitioner, the leader, and the self-realised

Gaiḍīya Vaiṣṇavs take shelter at three holy abodes—Śrī Nabadvīp Maṇḍal, Śrī Kṣetra Maṇḍal, and Śrī Vraja Maṇḍal. Śrī Nabadvīp Maṇḍal is best for the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* (those who are covered with bad elements, who have just begun practising devotion). Those who have the lowest qualification are in a greater need of mercy. Those who have not become strong in their practising life, who have just started practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness can do Śrī Nabadvīp Maṇḍal, this is good for them. Śrī Kṣetra Maṇḍal is for those who have progressed a little, who have started to practise seriously and who have no preliminary problems. Śrī Vraja Maṇḍal is for those who can remember the pastimes of the Lord, who can serve purely, i.e. those who have achieved perfection. These three holy abodes are the main shelters of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavs. In whichever of the three places one may stay, everyone should practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, make an effort, assist the service there. Those who cannot do that, i.e. those who cannot take shelter at any of these places or have not got such an opportunity in their life, should then remember the holy *dhām*, serve the holy *dhām*, help the holy *dhām*—then their deficiency (that they cannot stay and serve in the *dhām*) becomes compensated to some extent. If you cannot take shelter of the holy *dhām*, you can serve by helping the residents of the holy *dhām*, the servants of the holy *dhām*,

and the *dhām* itself with the funds, collection, etc.—some of your deficiency will be fulfilled through that, i.e. you will get some benefit. These three holy places of pilgrimage are the main places for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavs. There are holy places in South India too, there is nothing wrong with them. Yet, those who want to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously, should direct their vision and service hankering and effort towards these three holy *dhāms*.

We can also see that from all the three places all the *guru-varga* who are in the line of Śrī Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur took shelter of Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām. Śrīla Jagannāth Dās Bābājī Mahārāj, Śrīla Gaura Kiśor Dās Bābājī Mahārāj, Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur, Śrīla Prabhupād, Śrīla Vāmśidās Bābājī Mahārāj—they all stayed in Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām and served there.

gauḍa-vraja-jane bheda nā dekhiba
haiba varaja-bāsī

“I will see no difference between the residents of Gauda and the residents of Vraja, and I will become a resident of Vraja.”
(*Śaraṇāgati, Siddhi-lālasā*, 4)

Śrīla Jagannāth Dās Bābājī Mahārāj and Śrīla Gaura Kiśor Dās Bābājī Mahārāj served in Kuliya, Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur in Śrī Godrum, Śrīla Prabhupād in Śrī Dhām Māyāpur. They have much affinity or affection towards Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām. It is not true that they were indifferent towards Śrī Kṣetra Dhām and Śrī Vraja Dhām, but they all established their centres, practised and served in Śrī Gaura Maṇḍal. Those who identify themselves with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavs (who worship Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in strict adherence to the footsteps of Śrī Gaurasundar), find Śrī Gaura Dhām excellent and quite suitable. It does not mean that there is nothing in the other holy places. However, it is impossible to serve without serving Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām. If you find that you have not got this kind of special mercy, then the only thing that you must do is to direct, in the agony of sadness, all your effort,

goal, attention and vision onto the service to the holy residents of the Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām.

A holy place is a place where the pastimes of the Lord, the pastimes of devotees take place. Devotees always take shelter of the place where the Lord's pastimes are going on. When those who practise heart and soul (who live by practising), who are smart, skilful and wise in their service, get to do some service for Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām, they consider themselves fortunate.

If you want to be clever in your practising life, you should pay attention to this, it will be good for you. Wherever Gurudev keeps one, everyone must accept and follow it. This applies to every single practitioner. “*Guru kṛpa hi kevalam*”—the mercy of Gurudev is all in all; but those who are clever at their practising life and service life, want to bring satisfaction and happiness to Gurudev. It is necessary to always be conscious, “What is favourite to Gurudev?”

For example, *puspanna*, *khichudi* and *paramanna*—these three offerings are given to the Lord. But what does my Lord love? What does He really like? If you know it and can arrange for such things, it is good. Those who are very observant in their service life, must always be alert towards such things. Which holy *dhām* is my Gurudev's favourite? If you direct your effort, vision and attention towards that *dhām*, then your progress will be very quick.



All life is service life

Honouring *mahāprasād* is one of the devotional practices. The whole life should be service life. When you go to sleep, this is also a practice of devotion. When you are going to take bath, this is also a practice of devotion. Even resting is service. If you have a proper attitude to resting, bathing, honouring *mahāprasād*, etc., then your practising life will be smooth and right. All life is service life. "Gurudev is not well," "His health is bad," "He has a fever", "Gurudev is sick, do not come"—such words show a lack of devotional insight. Taking *prasād* is also a practice of devotion. Otherwise when somebody is giving eggplant fries to one person and does not give it to me, I become upset. For some, they pick vegetables from the pot, and for some, they give only juice. Those who distribute *prasād* are also doing service, it is also a practice of devotion. Distributing *prasād* to Vaiṣṇavas is also a spiritual practice of devotion. If the person who is distributing *prasād* is angry with somebody, he gives very little to them; and if it is somebody he likes, he gives them nicely. This is not service. If somebody does this, service will run away from them.

When you honour *prasād*, you must chant the glories of *prasād*—or chant other glorification. Singing a song and chanting *kīrtan* (glorifying) is not the same. Giving pleasure to Śrī Śrī Guru and Vaiṣṇavas is called service (*bhajan*) or *kīrtan*. Śrīman Mahāprabhu did not tell anyone to sing songs. He told everyone to chant *kīrtan*. *Kīrtan* is service. First you should think what *kīrtan* is actually beneficial for your practising life. *Kīrtans* chanted during *marigal-ārati* (morning *ārati*), *madhyāhna*

bhog-ārati (noon *bhog ārati*), and *sandhyā-ārati* (evening *ārati*) are fixed. It is necessary to worship these mantras. However, the *kīrtans* chanted during *parikramās* vary. When you practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously, *kīrtan* arises from within your heart. When you chant *kīrtan*, you must pour out your whole life, your whole being into it. When you chant *kīrtan* for His happiness with heart and soul (extracting and smearing mellows of deep love from your heart), the Lord, the Guru and the Vaiṣṇavs become very happy. On the other hand, if you only look for the tune, rhythm, and honour, then your *kīrtan* is mostly an effort to entertain the minds of common materialistic people—this is singing songs, not singing *kīrtan*. *Ārati* is one of the pastimes of the Lord—it is one kind of service to the Lord. If you relate yourself to Him and chant *kīrtan*, you will get a great result. When *kīrtans* are chanted before or after the class, you should chant them realising that this is a practice of devotion and service.

Among glorification (*kīrtan*) of the Lord's Name, beauty, qualities, pastimes, congregational chanting of the Holy Name (*Nāma-saṅkīrtan*) is the best. Śrīman Mahāprabhu placed emphasis on *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*. He Himself did only *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* and engaged others in chanting *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*. Those who have special qualification can also do *līlā-kīrtan* (singing the glories of the pastimes of the Lord). There are no such qualified Vaiṣṇavs at the Māṭh—we should sing only those *kīrtans* that Vaiṣṇavs who have a strong faith and are advanced in their spiritual practice, tell us to sing. Chanting *kīrtan* in a prayerful mood or submitting prayers from one's own heart is very favourable for one's practising life. When chanting *kīrtan*, you should identify yourself with the meaning of 'feet' (you should identify your place in relation to the 'feet' that you are chanting about). If your chanting *kīrtans* does not become service, then it is just singing some song. *Kīrtan* is service, through *kīrtan* you can

practice spiritual life, it uplifts you. When you sing songs, you please your own senses, others' senses, but *kīrtan* gives pleasure to the Lord, the guru and the Vaiṣṇavs. If *kīrtan* is not service, it becomes enjoyment. *Kīrtan* is a very special service. This is the special contribution made by Śrīman Mahāprabhu. Through *kīrtan*, you can learn how to serve and practise properly—before Mahāprabhu, nobody did it. You must engage singing in service. The *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* established by the great souls is the best. For those who are barely qualified (*kaniṣṭha-adhikār*), *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* is the best. Many sing, “*Vṛndāvane chabutarā tāhe mora manogherā* (My entire mind dwells within the courtyard of Vṛndāvan, Śrīla Narottama-gītī)” —but I know very well where *my* mind lives.



Lord's Śrī Vigraha līlā within material world

The Supreme Personality of Godhead come from the transcendental Vaikuṇṭha Dhām to this material world (Bhauma-prapañcha) and reveals His pastimes—this is His *avatāra-līlā* (pastimes of His incarnations). In the same way, the worshippable Deity is also *avatāra-līlā*, also pastimes of His incarnation. There is a very secret distinction between the pastimes of the Lord in the form of Śrī Vigraha, Śrī Mūrti, and Śrī Archā. Archā-avatār (worshippable, revered form) is a special manifestation of mercy. The Supreme Lord Himself appears as Śrī Gaurasundar, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-chandra, Śrī Rāmachandra, and so on—in the same way, Śrī Vigraha also appears on its own. When the Lord manifests His Archā form, He is then known as Svayambhu-archā (self-manifest worshippable Lord). Even when the Lord appears in the form of a Deity, He is still the Lord Himself—the Lord Himself appears for the benefit of *jīva* souls as Śrī Mūrti! The examples of this are Ṭoṭa Gopināth, Sākṣi-Gopal, Śrī Jagannāthdev. They manifest Themselves in eight different forms (*mṛṇmayī, dhātumayī, dārumayī, śilāmayī*, etc.)

śailī dāru-mayī lauhī lepyā lekhyā cha saikatī¹
 mano-mayī mani-mayī pratimāṣṭa-vidhā smṛtā
(Śrimad Bhāgavatam, 11.27.12)

“The Deity form of the Lord (Śrī Archā-avatār or Archāmūrti) is said to appear in eight varieties—(1) stone, (2) wood, (3) metal (gold, etc.), (4) earth, (5) paint, (6) sand, (7) the mind and

(8) jewels." The Lord Himself is present wherever He manifests Himself in a Deity form. Self-manifest Deities are not installed by anyone, They appear on Their own. Looking after Them, serving Them is a matter of a great fortune. A self-manifest worshippable Deity is an embodiment of mercy. The Lord comes as Śrī Rāmachandra to the house of Kauśalyā, as Gopāl to the home of Yaśodā, as Nimāichāḍ to the courtyard of Śachī Mātā—in the same way, a self-manifest Deity appears in different places. Gopāl appeared alone and lived in a jungle forest with all the rain and storms falling on Him. He gave an inspiration to the heart of Mādhavendra Purīpād to get his service. Service, *darśan*, care for such a self-manifest Deity has much more value. A self-manifest Deity stands out in its peculiar distinction.

Śrī Śrī Jagannāthdev was floating in the ocean near Śrī Puri Dhām—how great Śrī Śrī Jagannāthdev's pastimes are, how glorious it is! You cannot see such pastimes anywhere else.

Beside such self-manifest Deities of the Lord, great souls establish the Lord of their hearts in holy temples. To extend mercy to *jīva* souls, greatest self-realised souls (*mahābhāgavata-uttama siddha mahājans*) reveal the treasure of their hearts in the form of a Deity. [Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād's Govinda (self-manifest), Śrīla Sanātan Goswāmī Prabhu's Śrī Madan-mohan, et.al.]

Besides these two types of Deities, there are also Deities installed in temples according to the process given in the scriptures. Moreover, you can buy a calendar at the market, get some photograph or buy some deity of the Lord at the market and offer Him worship, flowers, *bhoga*. There are many different kinds of deities. Proper practitioners have affection for all manifestations of the Lord. Naturally, there is some distinction in the pastimes or some difference among Deities. Pastimes of a Deity manifest in a pure heart—Deities perform Their pastimes together with Their devotees. This is a very profound mystery.

Everyone is Lordship, but all Lordships are not the same, there is a difference.

Those who practise devotion do not show disrespect to any form of a Deity. They offer flowers to a calendar. They encourage faith in all deities. Different deities appear in different ways, and it is necessary to pay attention to it. What is each Deity's glory, which Deity is awakened—all this always plays within the hearts of pure devotees. Gopāl does not hide anything from Śrī Śrīla Mādhavendra Purīpād, but He cheats other people...

A Deity is an incarnation of the Lord's mercy. It is good for practitioners of devotion to give attention to the service of the holy Deities.



Eternal sweet relationship between guru and disciple

You should follow the etiquette appropriate for your qualification or right. Every practitioner of devotion should have a sense of etiquette. Those who have stronger devotion, stronger service and stronger love are the best practitioners. When the guru and Vaiṣṇavs see somebody takes responsibility for service, they become very happy. In the domain of devotion, everything is not the same. Śrī Śrī Rādhārāṇī is this, and another person is the same—this is not so. In the material world, the older you are, the higher position you have; the more money you have, the higher your position is; but the position of these things in the domain of devotion is not like this. There, it is necessary to be enriched with love and devotion.

Many want devotion from Gurudev—they write about it in their letters, they say about it in front of him also; but if you tell them to do something, they immediately pay obeisance and go away. There should be a relationship between the guru and the disciple.

Just as there is a relationship between a father and a son, between a husband and a wife, there is also a relationship between a guru and a disciple; but it is not the same relationship as between a shopkeeper and a customer. “Take anything you want—as long as you pay for it”—this is between a creditor and a borrower. A schoolmaster teaches students—he charges a fee and then teaches them. There is no relationship between such people, but there is a relationship between a father and a

son. How many wrong things the son does, how much problem he causes, but the father still saves some land and money for him. The relationship between a husband and a wife is the same—a husband does not give food to his wife, but she still never stops serving him; he does not give her good clothes and jewellery, but she does not say anything because there is love—another wife will say, “I have not got anything to eat! I do not have anything to wear!” and leave the house. Relationship comes from love. Love does not come from selfish interests. If there are selfish interests in any relationship, then this is a shopkeeper’s transaction. There is love in the relationship between a guru and a disciple—this is where the supreme benefit (divine love) comes from. I have taken a guru—he has given me a mantra, I have given him some donation. What other relationship is there? This is a shopkeeper’s transaction; but there is spiritual benefit in the relationship between a guru and a disciple—this relationship is based on love or service. If there is no love, there is no service either—neither is there a relationship. Therefore, even if there is an exchange of mantra, it does not create a relationship—but when you take the mantra from your guru, the possibility for this relationship to come is there. If you have such kind of a loving relationship, you must certainly be successful in your spiritual life. Just as there is a certain relationship between a father and a son, a certain relationship between a husband and a wife, there is also a certain relationship between a guru and a disciple. There are many gurus in this world. They give mantras, they take donations—such gurus open their ‘shop’ (Maṭh, temple, āśram, etc.) and sit there. You will come to them and they will not let you go back. There are many gurus in this world, but the number of disciples is very small. Some may say, “You have many disciples here.” They may have taken the mantra, but they are not disciples. You can see many Maṭhs, temples,

āśrams, etc.), but there are very few disciples in this world. Who is a disciple (*śisya*)? It is the one who accepts disciplining (*sāsan*). ‘Disciplining’ means flogging, lashing, or scolding, but the real meaning of the word ‘discipline’ means not beating, but correction, uplifting, giving benefit; it means picking up and uplifting the disciple from whatever position he or she may be in. Those who are fit for being disciplined are called disciples. Those who are regulated, guided, and taken care of are called disciples. “Gurudev can do anything he wants with me, I am ready to take his disciplining, rules, guidance on my head”—such disciples are very rare. There are thousands and thousands of disciples who just take the mantra, but in most cases, that guru-disciple relationship does not come because those who do become real disciples will want to be guided by Gurudev, but most people do not want to accept chastisement—very few people will want to be chastised. On the other hand, those who want to be chastised, do not cross Gurudev’s instruction all the time—at first, because of the result of your *karma*, you are not able to follow Gurudev’s order properly, but you think, “I will live following the guidance of Gurudev”—when you take on this resolve, then you will get the right to be called a disciple. And those who want to be chastised and who are able to take it, are extremely fortunate. When a disciple wants to be chastised by Gurudev and is chastised, then this is a proper disciple. It is worth noting that there are three categories or classes of disciples. (1) There is a class of disciples who neither want to be disciplined, nor do they get any disciplining; most people are in this category. (2) There is another class of disciples who want to be disciplined but they cannot follow that disciplining. There are some such people. They get disciplined, but they cannot follow it; even if they say they will follow it, they do not—this is still better than the first category. (3) The third class are the disciples

who want to be disciplined, want to live following rules, want guidance, and when they get disciplined by Gurudev, they follow his order. They want to be chastised, they get chastised—such disciples become gurus. If somebody wants to be chastised, has been chastised, and if Gurudev has made and is making a disciple from them, then such a disciple has the qualities of a guru.

Many have this misconception that if you take a mantra, you become a disciple. In fact, taking a mantra means there is a possibility that you will become a disciple. Those who can digest and follow chastisement have the right to become a disciple. If you want to be chastised, you will be chastised—if you are a proper disciple. *Guru-varga* give them an indication how to follow the rules, guidance and spiritual path. “Do not go this way, go this way!” A guru is a disciple who goes down the right path following the set rules.

Many disciples take the mantra and come saying, “Prabhu, please give me your mercy, please give me your blessing.” Why do they pray like this? They submit such prayers to get protection from some problems in their material life. They do not pray to get spiritual benefit. “Make anything you want from me”—I am a piece of clay, you can make a water pot, or a cooking pot from me, whatever you want. If the disciple is serious, then there will be built a guru-disciple relationship. If this relationship is established in your life, you can get the supreme benefit (pure loving devotion).

The relationship between a guru and a disciple is just like the relationship between a husband and a wife. Gurudev will do with the disciple whatever he wants. If you are scolded and kicked, you are a disciple. If Gurudev does not scold you, does not kick you and cannot beat you, then you are not a disciple. If I cannot discipline, guide or order someone, then they are not my

disciple. If the guru is a proper guru and there is this relationship or love between the guru and the disciple, then the result will be great. There are very few such disciples. You should try to become proper disciples.

"I want to be chastised by Gurudev—I will follow his order to a T." This should not be merely lip-deep, you must want it in writing, in your heart, and in your mind—I must hanker to be disciplined with my entire being. If you can imbibe such mood, you must certainly get benefit. If you have such mood, it will not take you long to get the result. There is no lack of obeisances (*pranām*) and donations (*pranāmi*). There are many disciples who offer flowers to a picture, but there are very few people who would want to accept disciplining properly and change their life according to it. If you have got the mantra and want to become a disciple, you must practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Just as there are very few disciples, there are also very few gurus. Just as there is only one Supreme Lord, the guru is also one. There are not many of them, but that is another subject.

Practising parikrama (one of the devotional practices) is called service to the holy feet (pāda-sevanam).

A holy temple is adorned by Tulasi, therefore we become reminded of Śrī Vṛndāvan. If you decorate it with lights and crotons, this beauty would not be there. Those who have the eyes can see and feel this supra-mundane beauty. I always observe those who practise devotional practices. I am interested in every single matter. Perhaps, I do not join all devotional practices, but I become very happy to see others try hard to follow them.



Service brings more service

It is necessary to be very careful and very clean on the path of worshipping Deities. This cleanliness must be in the kitchen, in the storeroom, and in the temple. If everything in the service of the Lord is not clean, it will be an offence (*aparādh*). If the servitor's leg accidentally touches the offering plate, it is necessary to wash the plate immediately. Somebody may think to themselves, "What to do?" This often happens when one does some service. This leads to offences. There should be much respect and reverence in Deity worship. Those who commit such offences, lose their service. You do not become a *brāhmaṇ* just by hanging a *brāhmaṇ* thread on your body. When this sense of reverence, sense of cleanliness comes, then you can understand that some *brāhmaṇic* qualities have come to you. Otherwise if you still have the qualities of a meat-eater, what will wearing a *brāhmaṇ* thread change? You must be careful even with the items you procure for the worship. The Lord is happy when His devotees approach His service with care. Service is rewarded with more service—when this happens, you will no longer know any leisure. When the Lord accepts somebody's service, He gives them even more service; and when He does not accept somebody's service (when there are offences in the service), then the service goes away from them. The result of the offences committed in the course of service (*sevā-aparādh*) is losing one's service. If the Lord does not accept somebody's service, it means He does not like the person—service to the temple goes away from such people. He does not open His mouth and say anything, but He will awake

such a mood in you that it will become impossible for you to stay at the temple. This is a very important point. When you are doing something that He does not want—if He does not accept your service—then material desires will come to you, your desire to enjoy material life will be growing, you will be doing fine, your name and fame will grow, wealth will grow, or such mood will come to your mind that you will not be able to serve any more or your health will go down—you will get such a disease that will forever remove you from your service. These things are the results of offences. On the other hand, when the Lord accepts your service, then your material desires will be weaker and weaker. When He accepts your service, you will feel humility, detachment from the material world; you will feel you are low and bereft, a beggar, a renunciate; floating in divine love, tears will always fall from your eyes, your heart will be melted—you will feel enthusiasm for your service. Those who have got some experience of the conscious (transcendental) domain, can see all these things. However, if you commit offences when you do service, your heart will become hard—there will be unconsciousness, materialism within you. The Lord keeps away those whose mind, heart does not get excited, who does not become overwhelmed with enthusiasm doing their service. For example, if your foot touches some items used for the Lord's service and you do not give it any importance (Oh, what to do?), you do not feel any fear—this is a symptom of callousness, hardness. When your heart becomes very hard, you will not be afraid of your Gurudev or the Lord. If you become daring, you are standing on the path leading to death; even if you are born in a family of *brāhmaṇas*, you will become an atheist (hard-hearted). Those who have no humility, fear and sense of reverence, have no right to worship Deities. The Lord is *antaryāmī*: He is all-knowing, He is the Supersoul. He can understand everything,

He can see everything—you cannot cheat Him. Those who have the eyes can see it when Śrī Gaurasundar indicates something to them secretly. If He accepts your service, you will be getting more service—after one service another service will come. He will keep you submerged forever through such service, He will keep you by His side—He will hijack you.



Self-submission is service to Kṛṣṇa with all your senses

If you show the propensity to offer yourself to the lotus feet of the Lord, then you have no other separate duty. When you have this strong feeling within you that you are surrendering yourself, then there will be no more thoughts or worries—you will not think about the future, about your wife, sons, brothers, relatives. There is no shopkeeper mentality in self-submission. So-called friends, wife, sons, brothers are all dacoits in disguise of relatives (*svajanākhyā-dasyu*). They prevent you from following the path of self-submission. “How will you live if you give everything to the Lord? You want to give everything to the Lord, but what will you eat yourself? Why should you give everything for Viṣṇu’s service? Will you keep anything for our enjoyment?

“chaitanya-chandrera bātula ke rākhite pāre?”

“Who can stop a madman of Chaitanya-chandra?”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 3.6.41)

Nobody can stop those who want to offer themselves to the Lord—such people become crazy, i.e. they have no sense of duty any more. Having no sense of duty towards one’s wife, father, mother is called ‘craziness’.

āmāre viṣayī, ‘pāgala’ baliyā

aṅgete dibeka dhūli

“Saying that I am mad, materialists will kick dust upon my body.”

(Śaranyāgati, Bhajana-lālasā, 13.4)

You will then have no knowledge of religion or non-religion any more—you will lose your own self. You become drawn

towards the Lord, you feel attracted to the Lord—and you become mad. You no longer consider whether the paraphernalia of this material world is good, bad, sinful, or pious. When the Lord's call comes to you, you will no longer think about your children, you will no longer have any sense of duty. Because you will no longer have all these feelings, people will call you mad. Madness is the work of self-submission. All consideration of sin and piety, what is good and what is bad, what is righteous and what is non-righteous, will be destroyed. Children, wife, relatives will stand in front of you—you do not take care of them, you do not want to see what they ate or not ate. They are disguised dacoits! When you feel within your heart the urge to submit yourself to the Lord, you will not pay attention to all such obstacles. You will not give it a second thought, you will become mad. In Śrīla Prabhupād's time, there was one Prabhu whose relatives would call him mad—they said he had lost his mind. He gave all his earnings to the feet of Śrīla Prabhupād. He gave everything to the last penny. His attraction to the sense of duty lost all its importance because he felt a deep surge to surrender himself to Śrīla Prabhupād arose in his heart. That is why his relatives said he was mad, but Śrī Śrī Guru-Vaiṣṇavas said that was his perfection, or success (*siddhi*). That which people call 'good' in this world is death, it is bondage. They say, "He has even left the pleasure of Śrī Śrī Guru-Vaiṣṇavas to make us happy." This is their deathly certificate. When Bali Mahārāj surrendered himself, many opposed him—but he did not care for it.

“rasa-varjam raso ‘py asya param dṛṣṭvā nivartate”

*“The taste for material things vanishes for the man of wisdom,
by his vision of the Supreme.”*

(Śrimad Bhagavad-gītā, 2.59)

Hankering for the supreme taste, supreme happiness is beautiful and ornamental. Then all illusory material taste that is

compared to a pig's stool will go away. Such fortune comes when you get the service to the Lord.

mānasa, deha, geha, yo kichhu mora
arpilū tuyā pade, nanda-kiśora

“I have submitted my mind, body, house, whatever I have, at Your feet, Nanda-Kíṣor.”
(Śaranāgati)

We must give everything to the Lord. Many think, "I can write well," "I can give a good class"—you must use everything for the service of the Supreme Lord. I will give my brain, education, intellectual capacity to the Lord, but I will not give my money, wealth—this is not self-submission.

Self-submission ('ātma-samarpaṇ') means you must give everything—your body, soul, wealth, mind, ego. It is necessary to clean the temple, to plough and plant the garden, and my job is to work with my pen (write), so why must I leave it and take up ladles and spoons (cook)? If you think in this way, then this is not self-surrender.

Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the highest worshipper; Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī has given everything to the service of Śrī Govinda—Her body, soul, beauty, youth, etc.



The very soul of practising life is to make your object of service happy

Everyone's ideal in life is to worship, to serve, and to take care of Śrī Gaura-Nityānanda and Śrī Rādhā-Govindasundar. To make the object of our worship, care and service happy is the only goal in our lives. Whatever devotional process we practise, our goal should be to give love to the object of our service. Whether we hear, chant *kīrtan*, cook or collect—whatever we do—we must always be alert and aspire to serve and take care of the object of our service (i.e. make Him happy). The purpose of our life is to make Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāī happy. It is not right to think about your own comfort or discomfort. Our purpose is to see that our worshippable Lord is happy.

"Nitāiyer karuṇā habe Vraje Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa pābe. When Nitai bestows His mercy, you will reach Radha-Krsna in Vraja." (*Śrīla Narottam-gīti*, 37) If you want to get service to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, you need to have the mercy of Nitāī. *"Dṛḍha kari' dhara nitāiyera pāya.* Firmly grasp Nitāī's feet." (*Śrīla Narottam-gīti*, 37) 'Worshippable' means service.

When a boy goes to school, what is his main goal? To pass the exams. That is why it is necessary to go to school regularly, to study from a schoolteacher. It is first necessary to study attentively, then you can pass your matriculation exams. In the same way, our goal in this devotional organisation is to make Śrī Śrī Govindasundar happy. Whatever you do, your main goal must be the happiness of the object of your service. I give a class, I give a speech, I sweep the room, I cook, I pick flowers, I string garlands, I worship the Deities, I go on collection, I distribute *prasādam*, I take care of the cows, I do the gardening—the main purpose or goal of all these devotional practises is to think about

the happiness of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govindasundar. If you are not always conscious about this purpose, if you forget it, or it evades you—it means you are not able to practise or serve properly. Whatever devotional activity you do, you must always see whether Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga are happy with that or not. If we fulfil this core, this goal, ideal, main purpose, then our practising life is proper. When these things are in place, you must continue your practising life being aware of the relation. Wherever one may be—you can stay at the temple or at your house—everyone must keep only one goal: to serve the Lord with love. “I stay at the temple, I am wearing saffron clothes, I have become a *sannyāsī*, I give the class and chant *kīrtans*, I go for collection, I teach—whatever I do, I do it only for Your own happiness. If You are not happy with that, then it is useless.” Whether the core, the very goal (the Lord’s satisfaction) is there or not—we must be always conscious of it. You can be a *ghastha*, raise your children, go to work, do farming or run a business, or you can be staying in a temple—no matter what your situation is, whatever you do, you must always keep this goal. Such life is called practising life (*sādhana*). Trying to please the Lord is called practising life. Unless you are firmly fixed at this goal or purpose, in the name of practising devotion you will be doing *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. You study so many scriptures, but you do not care for the Lord’s happiness. This is knowledge-exercise, practice of knowledge, or intellectual pursuit. “*Karma-kāṇḍa jñāna-kāṇḍa, kevala viśayera bhāṇḍa, amṛta baliyā yebā khāya / nānā yoni sadā phire, kadarya bhakṣaṇa kare, tāra janma adhahpāte yāya.*” Fruitive activities and mental speculation are simply cups of poison. Whoever drinks of them, thinking them to be nectar, must struggle very hard life after life in different types of bodies. Such a person eats all kinds of nonsense and becomes condemned by his activities of so-called sense enjoyment.” (Śrīla Narottam-gīti).

Those who in their practising life really care to make the object of their service happy, are intelligent—through their practising life they attain success. If you do not properly accept this main mantra, main vision, main goal, then your life is useless and you have not been able to practise devotion. The more intent and fixed you are on this goal, the greater practitioner you are. Are you reading scriptures? Why are you reading them? If you are reading to make the Supreme Lord happy, then it is good—then you are practising devotional life through that.

Have you left home and come to stay at the temple? Why have you come? If you have come to make the Supreme Lord happy, then it is wonderful. Otherwise, you have toiled for nothing. If you come to stay at the Māṭh to serve and please Śrī Hari, Guru, and Vaiṣṇavs, then this is practising life. This is the *sambandha* (knowledge of relationship), and this is the *abhidheya* (the means to the end). Everyone's duty is to keep this vision properly. Everyone within a devotional institution (its president, secretary, members) should have such an unswerving and firm vision. If one does not have the proper vision, what will I gain from such a guru? If one is not intent on satisfying the Lord, they are not a guru—such a guru is an illusion. The guru who himself engages others in satisfying the Supreme Lord, is the real guru. What kind of an *āchārya* one is if he neither tries to satisfy the Supreme Lord himself nor does he engage others in such service? He is an illusion of a guru, or a ghost. “*Gurur na sa syāt...*” (S.B. 5.5.18) If there is no satisfaction of the Supreme Lord, then what president, what secretary, what Vaiṣṇav are you? You have put on *tilaks*, took a *dāṇḍa*, become a *parivrājak*, but you do not strive for the happiness of Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, you do not try to make Them happy—then what kind of a Vaiṣṇav are you? “*Yei bhaje, sei bāda*. Great are those who serve the Lord.” (Cc., 3.4.67) Those who do not try to satisfy the Lord, carry their body in vain. Why

do they walk from place to place carrying their false body? They have no right to accept obeisance from anybody.

If you enter the domain of spiritual practice and always stay intent on satisfying the Supreme Lord, then such practising life, such spiritual practice will be successful. Whatever we do, whatever we have, we must give everything for His pleasure—then we will have a relationship, then we will be practising properly. Satisfying the Lord is the main ideal, the main mantra for a practitioner of devotion—this instruction should stay as a song in our hearts, as an inscription in our chest—then we will advance on the path of devotion. When Vajrāṅgajī (Hanumān) was given a necklace as a present, he said, “Is there Rāma’s Name on it? If there is no Name of Rāma on it, what will I do with it?” Then he was asked, “Do you have Rāma’s Name written in your chest?” Vajrāṅgajī then tore apart his chest and showed that Śrī Rāmachandra and Śrī Sītā Devī were sitting in his heart. The ideal of practising devotees is to make their Lord, Guru, and Vaiṣṇavs happy. We want to bring satisfaction of Śrī Guru, satisfaction of the Supreme Lord, satisfaction of Vaiṣṇavs in our lives—we want to become established in this ideal. If we can keep the proper relationship, vision and serve, care, give the class, manage, then we will be successful. If you can focus your vision here, then everything will be successful. Every guru, every Vaiṣṇav, every disciple should have such a goal and vision.

The better you can keep this vision, the further you can step into the domain of devotion, the more Vaiṣṇav qualities you have.

All this is practising devotees’ line—their very breath, their very life, it is a matter of life and death for them. Maṭh, temple, scriptures, lectures, discussions of scriptures, speeches, cooking, collection, Deity worship—everything becomes useless if you are not intent on giving happiness to the Lord. If anyone stays here

with any other plan and purpose, they will have to be removed from here one day or another. This is not a Mission for those who have other desires.

Viddhi-sādhana-bhakti (devotional practising life guided by rules and regulations) is often explained and accepted; however the line of loving devotion is a different line. Loving devotion (*prema-bhakti*) goes in a peculiar way. Common *jīva* souls, even practising *jīva* souls cannot understand this because *prema-bhakti* (loving devotion) works in a completely different way.



In a devotee's life, service is the vow, service is the life force, service is the duty

Good food, good clothes, good room or any sense-gratification represent desires for enjoyment, or cravings. The desire to enjoy is called a craving (*bubhukṣā*). Those who have all these desires to enjoy engage in fruitive works. Cravings have a very close relationship with fruitive works. To satisfy your own senses, to satiate your thirst for pleasure, you must work, run some business or do farming. All this sense-gratification is unfavourable to devotion. Devotee practitioners know that the desire to enjoy goes against devotion, but many cannot understand, cannot grasp that the thirst for liberation also goes against devotion. This is a very subtle point. Liberation means you become free from bondage. We do not want to suffer from unhappiness, we do not want disturbances, troubles. These are called a thirst for liberation, or a desire for salvation (*mumukṣā*). For a practitioner of pure devotion, this desire for salvation is extremely unfavourable to devotion. Many have this love for peace or luring attraction to peace. "It is not necessary to suffer from any problems," "Everything happens without any struggle"—this is called a thirst for liberation or seductive attraction to peace. Those who want to live in peace become pursuers of knowledge. Because they want peace, they live in a cave in the Himalayas. Those who want to practise devotion have to completely give up all their attraction to peace, love of peace, or dreams about liberation.

To feel lust or pleasure is condemnable for a practitioner of devotion. You can understand this easily. However, many cannot grasp that the love of peace is even more condemnable, it is a subtle obstacle on the path of devotion.

“I will not eat good food, I will not wear good clothes.” This is easy to understand. However, if you want to live in peace, if you want to live an untroubled life, if you do not want any anxiety, harassment, struggle—such desires also obstruct the path of devotion. Many cannot understand it. I want to do that which can be done without any struggle, anxiety, harassment, or trouble. Such ‘mood’ or ‘feeling’ is typical for most practitioners of devotion. Such mentality is called desire for salvation (*mumukṣā*). This is where the biggest difference between knowledge-seekers and devotees lies. Knowledge-seekers (*jñānīs*) never set their foot in a place or do anything that involves any anxiety, disturbance, or problem. That is why they want to stay alone on the bank of a river, to live in seclusion in some cave in mountains. However, devotees are not afraid of any struggle. Just as they keep away from the thirst for pleasure, in the same way they keep away from easy life, attraction to peace, love of seclusion. Many think that when they stay at the temple they face the same disturbances, the same struggles that they had to suffer from at home. “I have come to the temple, but even here I could not live peacefully. Then what did I come here for? If I am to go to a peaceful, untroubled place, then I agree. I want to live in peace”—such mentality is a symptom of the desire for salvation. However, pure devotees, whose only vow in life, whose only goal, only ideal in life is pure service, do not want to avoid disturbances. Those who want to serve the Lord, continue serving even amidst problems. “My duty is service”—in devotees’ life, service is their vow, service is their duty.

I do not want any happiness, I do not want peace, I do not want an easy life, I do not want a break, I only want continuous

service. You do service and whatever problem comes, whatever unhappiness comes, whatever struggle comes—you must accept everything. This love of peace lingers in the minds of many practising devotees. Many think, "I had it good at home, but since I have come here, I have had to roam around so much just for the sake of two rupees, I work in the office so much that my pen has gone blunt. I have come here to practise devotion, but why are there so many problems?" Why take so much trouble, suffer so much anxiety for the sake of family life? Anxiety, disturbances, and struggle in the material life is the cause of bondage—it does not bring any benefit to your life. If you can accept all the disturbances, troubles, and misery for the Lord's service, you will get a great benefit—your misery is the price for the Lord's happiness. "*Tomāra sevāya, duḥkha haya yata, seo ta' parama sukha.* All the distress I encounter in Your service is also my greatest happiness." (*Śaranya-gati*, 16.4) Seeing the Lord's happiness, the soul becomes even happier. That is its reward.

There are many enjoyers in this Mission. Self-satisfaction goes against devotion. It is necessary to avoid this. However, attraction to liberation, desiring peace are fearsome and condemnable. Those who desire peace, are devilish although they look like saintly persons externally. A party of such desirous people wander about looking for trifling things, they stay in seclusion and show renunciation. These are not real saintly persons. They can wear a mask of a saintly person, but inside they seek their own happiness. Therefore, such people are extremely unsaintly.

Devotees jump into troubles, and they make the Lord happy amidst all the troubles. If you cannot sleep at night because you are thinking about your service, this is good. I do not want to avoid problems, I do not want peace; I want only service to the holy lotus feet of the Lord. This desire for peace lingers in the hearts of many people—they think that they lived nicely in their families, but when they come to a devotional

institution they face so many problems. Those who like to avoid problems, are knowledge-seekers (*jñānīs*). However, this is not the ideal of renounced devotees. Kuntī Devī prayed, "If so much unhappiness comes, let it come—I do not wish to avoid it because when I am amidst unhappiness I remember You more." "I do not need unhappiness, I do not need anxiety! I would like to sit, do nothing, and take nice *prasādam*"—whether the Lordships' service is done or not, that they do not care. Many cannot understand these subtle obstacles on the path of devotion.

People come to the temple, but they want to eat nice food—what kind of a devotee is that? You take saffron, and always stay clean and prim—any such blemish can be easily seen. You do not want to get involved with any problem—this is a description of a saintly person, but this is the ideal of a knowledge-seeking saintly person. Gauḍiya Maṭh's managers often write letters saying, "Prabhu! You have kept me here amidst so many disturbances, servitors do not listen to me, I am toiling here alone!" Such complaints come all the time. The servitors also say all the time, "Prabhu! I cannot stay with the temple manager. I have to wear torn clothes, when I am sick, he does not give me medicine, he does not give me proper food, etc." There are so many complaints. Practising devotees, temple managers, temple servitors should not have this mood. Service is never without problems. When you serve Deities, you have to serve even amidst problems. I will suffer all the problems myself not to cause any problem to Gurudev and Vaiṣṇavs—such mood is the ideal of practising devotees. Service means not giving any anxiety to Gurudev and Vaiṣṇavs. In the course of service, whatever problem comes, let it come, I will continue trying to please Prabhu amidst it." One day or another you must get the result of such service. One day, the Lord will give such a servitor a place in the transcendental world—He will take him on His lap. When you keep attachment

to your service despite any problems, you become purified—nothing can compare to such purification. Service can bring pure loving joy (*prema-ānanda*). This joy of service can never compare with the hankering for peace. Let the problems come on my head, as long as no disturbance comes to my Master. May he happily serve his Lord. Suppose a thief comes, if I must scream out for my Master, then what did he keep the guard for?

I can remember very well how, one day, I came to Gurudev because there was some problem downstairs. I wanted to tell about it to Gurudev to have the problem solved. However, Gurudev told me, “I have kept an Alsatian dog downstairs, but when some problem comes, the dog cannot face it—it jumps on my shoulder and cries, ‘Save me! Save me!’” From that day on, I have never again complained about anything to Gurudev—I did not give any problem to Gurudev, I dealt with all problems myself.

When I was the gatekeeper at the Nabadwīp Māṭha, I had to take so much responsibility. I had to deal mostly with illiterate villagers. They often troubled me, but I have never complained to Gurudev or asked him to remove some servitor. I accepted whatever fell to my lot. Although I never complained about anything myself, Śrīla Gurudev understood everything and spoke about removing somebody himself. But I told myself, “Whatever problem you are giving me, give it. Later, everything will be all right. I will endure all disturbances myself, but I will not annoy Gurudev”—such was my nature on its own. It is not in my nature to complain about any servitor in any way. I have always felt that the Lord’s service can never be without problems. Amidst disturbances, I will continue serving my Lord as far as possible by me—this has always been my mood from head to toe.

In Śrī Gaya Dhām, *bhoga* is offered to Lord Viṣṇu at His lotus feet. There, He takes the offering with His feet. Every single limb of the Lord’s can do everything—He can not only hear with His

ears, He can also eat, see, and do everything else with His ears; He can not only see with His eyes, He can also eat and hear with His eyes. In this way, all parts of His body can carry out all functions. In Śrī Gayā Dhām, Śrī Viṣṇu performs His *śringāra* pastimes (dressing up pastimes) with His feet. His thousand Names are chanted there until 10 o'clock at night—a Tulasi leaf is offered with each Name. The *śringāra* pastimes happen at His holy feet through the Tulasi leaves, sandalwood paste, etc. The parts of the Lord's body are not mundane, they are transcendental, i.e. endowed with consciousness. Men can only see with their eyes, they cannot eat with them. Human senses are limited. Also, Śrī Jagannāthdev's limbs are not manifest, but His peculiar lotus eyes are manifest fully. Śrīman Mahāprabhu would come to have the *darśan* of His lotus eyes. Śrīla Jagannāthdev is Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is Vraja-Bihārī-lāl in Śrī Dhām Vṛndāvan—here He reveals His very own original self to the topmost degree.



The highest worship of Śrī Gaurasundar is through saṅkīrtan

It is quite easy to serve and worship Śrī Gaurasundar through *saṅkīrtan*, moreover *saṅkīrtan*'s power of appeal is much stronger. If you chant the Holy Name, it makes it easy to practise devotional life. Through just a little practice you can get divine love and joy. *Saṅkīrtan* is the highest worship of Śrī Gaurasundar. This is the truth—this is indicated by Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar. He takes this pleasure: whoever chants His Name gets easily hijacked. If you chant the Holy Name with your very being, with joy in your heart, Lord Śrī Gaurasundar becomes attracted. You study scriptures for three-four hours a day, but you can get even a greater benefit if you chant the Holy Name with heart and soul during just half an hour. The Holy Name cleanses the heart and lets one taste nectar. By studying scriptures you cannot get direct service, but if you chant the Holy Name, you can get everything directly. Chanting the Holy Name increases the joy in the Lord's heart—He cannot turn His eyes and look in another direction. That which you cannot get by practising yoga, sacrifices, meditation, etc. can be attained easily and more amply through chanting. This is Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar's incredible gift. Because *jīva* souls are not able to concentrate in Kali-yuga, the Lord has given them the chanting process. However, the core of chanting is the heart. The Holy Name should be chanted with heart. Tune, rhythm, measure, tempo—these are not the heart of *kīrtan*, they are non-essential. The purpose of *kīrtan*

is the heart or one's very own being. If you cannot chant with heart and soul, your chanting will not be proper. Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi dance, They do not chant—everybody else chants *kīrtan*, and Śrī Gaura-Nitāi dance. If you can chant the Holy Name and dance with your heart and soul, the Lord will become attracted easily. If you have unwanted elements, crookedness, hypocrisy inside, if you have a mess inside you, then you will not be able to chant the Holy Name. Heart is the most important ingredient of *kīrtan*—not tune, rhythm, measure or tempo. In cooking, salt is the main ingredient—if you put all the spices but do not put salt, your cooking will be inedible. If your heart is clean, then you can easily chant with heart and soul. Therefore, heart is the most important thing in chanting and dancing.

There is one more easy way that is akin to *kīrtan*—feeding the Lord. However, *kīrtan* is incomparable. There is nothing that can give the Lord more joy than *kīrtan*. Nevertheless, if you make very nice preparations and offer them to the Lord, it pleases Him. This joy-giving offering of *bhoga* goes after *kīrtan*. However, feeding the Lord involves much arrangement. First of all, it is necessary to have a temple, a Deity, money, good ingredients; it is necessary to know how to cook well; then, it is necessary to know how to offer it nicely. Cooking and feeding the Lord means some fear of offence, there is always a higher chance of doing something wrong inadvertently, of having deficiencies. There are not such obstacles in chanting and dancing. There is so much bother involved—worship, shopping, cooking! Besides that, the result of chanting and dancing is greater than the result of serving a Deity. The Lord also feels much more joy through *kīrtan*. However, if you read this, if you study scriptures, you can get a greater result. This is also care and service. I am reading a book, what does He get through that? Think about it. I am reading because it makes Him happy. However, the Lord becomes fully

controlled by those who dance and chant His Holy Name—He cannot take His eyes off such devotees. You cannot get such result by reading some books.

Deity worship is meant for householders because unless you worship a Deity, you will be eating stealthily or stealing. If householders have money, riches, and health, they should worship Deities. Mental Deity worship is theoretical, there is nothing tangible in it. I do not like this because this is like an exercise of intelligence or knowledge. Chanting the Holy Name brings a quick result. Deity worship and studying scriptures bring the result with a delay.



Śrī Dhām Māyāpur—Śrīla Prabhupād's heart

One is capable of doing service to the extent that Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar accepts their service. We can send our application, but whether we will be granted it or not, it is up to Him.

Śrīla Prabhupād was always in tours. Whenever he would come from various places around India to Kolkata, he would visit Śrī Dhām Māyāpur for two-three days. Śrī Dhām Māyāpur was his very heart. If you take a fish out of water and put it on the bank of the river, it will flip and twist—in the same way, Śrīla Prabhupād was always anxious to come to Śrī Dhām Māyāpur. He did not listen to any prohibition or restriction—he would just go there. One day, everybody was sitting with Śrīla Prabhupād at Bhakti-bhavan in Śrī Chaitanya Maṭh in Śrī Dhām Māyāpur. At that time, somebody came and gave the news that 'Adhokṣaja Viṣṇu' appeared at the place where the foundation for the new temple had been dug. Hearing the news, everybody said, "We are astonished!" Śrīla Prabhupād also said, "I am also astonished. I have been singing the glories of the Supreme Absolute for so long, and now He has appeared before us. This Adhokṣaja Viṣṇu is the worshippable Deity of Śrīla Jagannāth Miśra-dev."

Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar is extremely happy with the saṅkīrtan of pure Vaiṣṇavs

Saṅkīrtan gives joy to Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar. It is easy to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness in *saṅkīrtan*. *Saṅkīrtan* cleanses the mirror of the heart, extinguishes the fire of material existence—these are minor benefits. Dirty mind and heart become clean, the fear of material existence, the fear of bondage is removed. There are bad desires in our hearts, there is thirst for money, there are thoughts of material life—all this is destroyed by the shadow touch of *saṅkīrtan*. However, the main benefit is “*pratipadām pūrnāmr̥tāvādanam*”—*saṅkīrtan* of the Holy Name allows you to taste full-fledged nectar at every step. In *saṅkīrtan*, you can taste nectar. The tangible result of Śrī Hari-*saṅkīrtan* is the possibility to taste nectar—*saṅkīrtan* produces nectar of joy at every step. One can taste (i.e. realise, feel) the nectar of the Name, the nectar of the beauty, the nectar of the pastimes of the Lord, and the nectar of the Lord’s associates. The Lord is an emporium of *rasa*, and through the chanting of the Lord’s Name, one can taste this *rasa* (nectar). Not only material existence is destroyed, but one can taste the nectar of the Name, the nectar of the pastimes, etc. The nectar of the Name, the nectar of the beauty, the nectar of the pastimes, and the nectar of the Lord’s associates—everything is full of nectar. It is necessary to realise what sort of nectar this is. The Lord’s Name is full of nectar, the Lord’s form, beauty are full of nectar, the Lord’s qualities are full of nectar, the Lord’s pastimes are full of nectar. His Deity, His body are nectarean from the tip of His hair to His toe. His associate servitors are also full of nectar. Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī, Śrīla Sanātan Goswāmī—everyone is full nectar.

ei chhaya gosāśi yabe vraje kailā vāsa
rādhā-kṛṣṇa-nitya-līlā karilā prakāśa

"When these six goswāmīs lived in Vraja, they revealed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's eternal Pastimes."

(Śrīla Narottam-gīti)

When they served, the pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa manifested. The Lord is the master, friend, He is affectionate, sweet, His beauty, the glory of His qualities, etc. everything becomes revealed. When the Lord is near His associates, His inconceivable quality of all-encompassing *rasa* overflows, becomes revealed. He is full of ecstasy, He is the very embodiment of ecstasy. They not only simply heard about this ecstasy and repeated it, but they actually tasted it themselves—this nectar came as a feeling within their heart, and they tasted it internally. The Lord's form is full of nectar, the Lord's qualities are full of nectar, the Lord's pastimes are full of nectar, the Lord's associates are full of nectar—they realised and experienced all this, it entered within them. That is what is called tasting full-fledged nectar (*pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam*). If your heart is pure, if there are no material desires in your heart, when you have no material bondage, then the taste of this ocean of ecstasy plays within your heart. This is not some ornate words or songs, we are being told that this can be tasted. When you eat and taste a *rasagulla*, this is one thing, and hearing or talking about *rasagulla* is a different matter. If you have not tried it yourself, there will be no relishing, no realisation in your words. The experience (*darśan*) of this nectar comes to pure hearts purged of any unwanted elements.

What does Kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtan mean? Playing the *mṛdaṅga*, *karatāls* and singing songs together with many people is not *kīrtan*. If you sing together with some radio artist or a musician, you may practise music skills, but through radio *kīrtans* you can neither taste the nectar of divine love that was described above,

nor will such *kīrtan* destroy your material bondage. It has to be pure *saṅkīrtan*. It takes a pure great soul to bring and introduce such pure *saṅkīrtan*. A pure great soul is a soul who has been captured by devotion through chanting of the Holy Name, and who has been accepted by Bhakti Devī. If you can join and assist the chanting, the dancing of such pure Vaiṣṇavas, then when you see such chanting of the Holy Name, when you hear it, or speak about it, it will destroy your material existence, paralyse your material desires—your heart will become pure, and you will get to taste or realise this ocean of entire ecstasy. When Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar accepts somebody as His very own and such a soul (a relisher of the ecstasy of *kīrtan*, devoted to *kīrtan*, a servant of *kīrtan*, a slave of *kīrtan*) chants the Holy Name or makes others chant it, then “the Holy Name arises on its own” (“*Nāma amani udita haya bhakata gīta-sāme*”). Śrī Nām Prabhu does not arise or appear in the *kīrtans* of radio artists or professional *kīrtanīyās*. Śrī Nām Prabhu Himself arises in the chanting initiated by devotees (i.e. those who have devotion), but He does not arise in the *kīrtan* of non-devotees. When somebody smokes ganja, cigarettes, or drinks tea, and comes to sing producing fancy tunes—this is not *kīrtan* (chanting of the Holy Name). When a devotee chants the Holy Name with their whole being, with their heart and soul, then Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar is present there Himself. If you can hear the *saṅkīrtan* of such great souls, if you can behold it or join it, you can taste the nectar. Kṛṣṇa is the emporium of all *rasa*, the glory of His Name, beauty, qualities, pastimes, associates is so great! All this glory is revealed through the pure *kīrtan* of great souls. When people eat fish, meat, count money and do *kīrtan*, their *kīrtan* is just a bogus noise. On the other hand, when Bhakti Devī accepts one’s service, then full nectar, ecstasy can be tasted through their *kīrtan*. If you come in touch with the shadow of the dancing and chanting of the Holy Name of such a great soul, it

will cleanse your heart, remove all material desires, and destroy your material existence—then, when you join this chanting of the Holy Name in your pure heart, you can realise the ecstatic nectar of the Lord's Name, feel the ecstatic nectar of the Lord's form, realise the ecstatic nectar of His pastimes, and behold the nectar of His associates. You will become completely overflowing and tranced by such chanting of the Holy Name.

When one chants the Holy Name with heart and soul, then, if you hear or chant in the *saṅkīrtan* of such a personality, you must certainly get the described result. You can chant the Holy Name, play the *mṛdaṅga*, produce intricate beats, sweat profusely, but such *kīrtan* will not produce the result of the chanting of the Holy Name, i.e. this is not real *kīrtan*. All such *kīrtans* are full of offences, all this is unholy Name. This is actually a matter of enjoyment. This is thousands times better than the clamour produced by communists—it is even better than the bawling produced by courtesans' unholy singing, radio songs, movie songs, and politics. However, bogus chanting cannot produce all that result of the chanting of the pure Holy Name. If offensive chanting of the Holy Name is better than mundane talks, then I will always keep on chanting like this—if you have such mentality, you will be barred from further progress on the path of your devotional life. The real result can come only through the Holy Name chanted by pure Vaiṣṇavs.



"On the days when I see devotional service in my home, I feel Goloka has manifested there"

Wake up in the morning, take *darśan* of the Lordships' *maigal-ārati*, do *parikramā* of the temple, practise dancing, chanting, and other devotional processes together with devotees—if you start your day in this way, then the whole day will go well. "Ye dina gr̥he bhajana dekhi gr̥hete goloka bhāya. On the days when I see devotional service taking place in my home, I feel that Goloka has manifested there." (*Śaranāgati*) If you start your day from first taking *darśan* of the Lordships at dawn, then doing *parikramā* of the temple with devotees and *kīrtan*, with affection, love, extracting love from your entire being, then the whole day will be favourable—it means the day will be spent amidst service to the Lord, striving to make the Lord happy, performing activities that are pleasing to the Lord. *Maigal-ārati* of the Lord is the first pastime the Lord performs during a day. "Prabhāte harilām tava mukha, dina yābe bhāla. If I see Your face at dawn, the whole day will go well." If you start the journey of your day from the *darśan* of the holy Deities, it will bring you benefit. There are such people that if you see them, your whole day becomes spoilt. If you join *maigal-ārati*, *kīrtan*, *parikramā* of the Lordships, then you will be careless, happy, rich and appreciated—such mentality is not good; it brings inauspiciousness because even thought the day is spent in the service of the Lord, in practice of Krṣṇa consciousness, in hearing, chanting, but if you observe this

practice early in the morning without heart and soul, you will not get a good result. Those who can do it seriously, earnestly, extracting love from their hearts, get benefit very soon. "The childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day." (John Milton) If you look at the early morning, you can see how the rest of the day will go—in the same way, you can see a person's attitude, background, likes, dislikes in their childhood and you can understand what kind of person they will grow up to be. If your day starts from first of all making the Lord happy, then the whole day can pass in the service to the Lord. If your day starts in the association of pure devotees, then it is very good, this is a very happy thing. However, one does not get the association of pure devotees all the time in their life. Does it mean that it is not necessary to join the morning pastimes of the Lordships if there is no such association? This is not so. The Lordships' early morning pastimes bestow benefit only upon those who practise spiritual life. It is better to eat chipped rice than not eat at all, but some will say, "If I was not given rice, then why must I eat chipped rice?" Such thinking is not right. In the same way, even if you do not get pure devotees' association, you will get benefit from taking *darśan* of *maigal-ārati*. The more you can do with love and affection, the more you can practise with love and affection, the more result or benefit you will get.

Śrī *Guru-varga* arranges a programme for the benefit of practitioners' life so that they could stay awake in remembrance of the Lord from morning to evening.

We find in the Bible: if you come to the church, kneel down and pray to the Lord, He will cleanse all the sins, all the wrongdoing, all the uncleanness and impurities that have accumulated in your heart during the whole week; if you pray humbly, then the filth accumulated in you over the week will be cleansed and removed. They do it once a week, but pure devotees spend every day, every moment in the service of the Lord.

If you come for the *maigal-ārati*, chant *kīrtans*, do *parikramā*, etc. and do it without heart and soul, like some chore, you will not really get a good result. However, it is better to follow it as a chore than not do at all. If you take *darśan* of the *ārati* with love, it not only gives pleasure to the Lord, but gives joy to the practitioner as well.

A good doctor prescribes medication and also gives a dietary chart and draws a treatment plan to cure the disease quickly. In the same way, our *guru-varga* have given us a daily programme chart so that we could progress in our spiritual life quickly. *Guru-varga* are the guardians of our spiritual life. They want benefit for their disciples (for those who have taken shelter in them). That is why they say, "Continue in this way, serve like this, follow all the rules and processes properly, and you will get spiritual wealth." If we follow all the orders (*ādes*), direction (*nirdeś*) and advice (*upadeś*) properly, then our practising life will be all right. If we can follow his prohibition with utmost chastity, then our practising life will be moving forward. Studying is an austerity for students. Just as professors give students direction, just as they give them coaching, "If you read like this, if you remember this by heart, you will get a good result"—in the same way, if pure practitioners of devotion follow the order, direction and advice of Gurudev, they too can get a good result. If a real practitioner wants to follow Kṛṣṇa consciousness properly, they must follow the path their Gurudev shows them and follow the order, direction and advice they receive from Gurudev. *Guru-varga* gives instruction and indication that *śravan* (hearing), *kīrtan* (chanting), *parikramā* (circumambulation of the temple or holy *dhām*), service, etc. are favourable. If you start any work following this instruction, you will definitely get a good result. Those who practise Gurudev's instruction seriously, can see the result very quickly. If Kṛṣṇa consciousness is just some passing fad for you, if you are not firmly fixed in your devotional practising life, and if you do not

particularly care for the methods of practising life, then your success is not certain. If a student studies what he likes, if he does desultory reading, he will not get a good result. It is necessary to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously, sincerely, unswervingly. If you follow Gurudev's instruction, you will get a good result even within just one year. Those who are not serious, who are not firm in their practice, they will not get the result soon, it will come later. Being serious is also a spiritual practice. Seriousness comes from Gurudev—you must keep everything he says, whatever instruction he gives, whatever indication he gives, in the chamber of your heart. It is necessary to be eager for his words, his instruction. Those who want to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, must follow the path Gurudev shows and the instruction Gurudev gives. Gurudev may often not say clearly, "Do this," "Do that," but if you are attentive towards him, then whenever you see any slightest hint coming from his nose, face, eyes, ears, you will be able to understand it. Those who are intelligent take advantage of such hints in their practising life. 'Intelligent' does not mean you can learn many things by heart, you can reproduce things well, that you can write good articles, etc. Who is intelligent? Intelligent is he who receives such hints and practises accordingly in his life. Gurudev is the source of practitioners' inspiration; he is the revealer of the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the practitioners; he is the light; he is our guardian. Many times, Gurudev gives only an indication, a hint, and disciples understand it and use it to improve or adjust their spiritual life. Primary teachers can take a pupil's hand and teach him to write, but a post-graduate professor will not do it, he will only give a hint. Here too, in the domain of practising life, if you can understand Gurudev's hint, his heartfelt desire and can live following that, then you can get the result very soon, i.e. you can attain ultimate perfection.

Dīna kṛṣṇa-dāsa kahe nāma-saṅkīrtan: this poor servant of Kṛṣṇa is chanting saṅkīrtan”

The main symptom of a servant of Kṛṣṇa is that he is poor. The main identity of servants of Kṛṣṇa is their poorness—i.e. they consider themselves poor and lowly. ‘Poor’ means having nothing, having no qualification, they do not feel they can do anything. “Whatever I try to do, turns out bad; I am not able to make the object of my service happy.” In other words, it is humility. Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar said,

trṇād api sunīchena taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyah sadā hariḥ

“One who is humbler than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree, who gives honour to others without desiring it for himself, is qualified to always chant the Holy Name of Krishna.”
(Śikṣāṣṭaka, 3rd verse)

Considering yourself honour-less (*a-mānī*, wanting no honour for yourself), but giving honour to others (*māna-dena*) is called lowliness (*su-nīchatā*). Humility is the Vaiṣṇav’s ornament, garb and embellishment. Humility brings beauty to the Vaiṣṇav. The beauty or attire of a Vaiṣṇav is humility. Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar loves such humility a lot; He swooned over the humility of Śrīla Haridās Ṭhākur and Śrīla Sanātan Goswāmī. Śrīla Haridās Ṭhākur did not want to take *prasād* sitting in one row with all the Vaiṣṇavs. Although he was invited, he would say, “Let Vaiṣṇavs take *prasād* first, I will take later.” Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar wanted

to embrace Śrī Sanātan Goswāmī, but Śrī Sanātan Goswāmī considered himself a *yavan*, untouchable, low-caste and wanted to keep away—he was born into a Karṇāṭa brāhmaṇ family, he was a great scholar, but how much humility he has! “I am untouchable, I do not have a drop of love for You, I have no service mood!” Śrīla Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī had opulence like that of Indra, the king of heaven, and a wife, beautiful like an angel, but he left everything. Being so greatly qualified, he took rotten rice from a drain in Puri, washed and took it—this is how he served his Lord. When Śrī Śrī Syāmasundar sees humility in someone, He becomes extremely happy. The greatest ornament of Vaiṣṇavas is their humility. Those who have no humility have no devotional qualities. “I do a big service! But for me, this and that would not happen”—this is pride, ego, this is not Vaiṣṇavism. One can do so much service, but they still consider themselves low—“I am a poor beggar, I have not been able to do anything. Whatever I do, it is always deficient.” Such mood is an ornament of a Vaiṣṇav. This feeling of being poor is their beauty. The poorer a Vaiṣṇav is, the more he is able to attract the mercy of Śrī Gurudev and Śrī Haridev (the Supreme Lord). However, some come forward and sit first—this is transgression of etiquette—they have no right to stand or sit ahead of everyone. This is arrogance, this is transgression of etiquette. “*Maryādā-laṅghana āmi nā pārō sahite.* I cannot tolerate transgressions of the standard etiquette.” (Cc., 3.4.166) The opposite of it is poorness. “*Trṇād api sunīchena*”—just as a blade of glass lies on the ground, we must become even lower than this blade of grass. The quality of tolerance arises in those who have such humility. No matter how much criticism, how much harassment comes, let it come, they do not attack anyone. They do not respect me, they do not appreciate me, they do not accept my qualities, but I tolerate everything. If you cut a tree, strike it with a spade, it does not say anything. This is

called tolerance. Such tolerance comes from humility. People say, "He has so much qualification! He can write well, he can give a nice class—he does so much service!" Others can say these things, but a proper servant will say, "I have not been able to do anything, my service did not please my Lord because in terms of enjoyment, He is the supreme enjoyer—nobody can enjoy as much as He. Can I serve Him with love? My service belongs to a lower plane." "*Bahu sevā alpa kari māna.* Despite so much service, they think it is nothing." "What kind of Vaiṣṇav am I? What kind of servitor am I? I am making innumerable mistakes at every step. Because I am unqualified, there is so much disturbance created." Once, a *brāhmaṇa* came to Śrī Rāmachandra and said, "Because of Your sin, Your kingdom has died prematurely. You are the king, but You have done wrong, You have made a mistake, that is why we see this premature death now." I am such an insignificant servant of the temple! Because I am so unqualified, I make so many mistakes in service.

Such feeling of poorness is an ornament of a Vaiṣṇav. The more humility one has inside, the more Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar is satisfied. If you want to chant the Holy Name of the Lord, you must consider yourself not worthy of any honour, low and poor. It is necessary to have these qualities (being lower than a blade of grass, etc.) in every devotional practice—in *kīrtan*, *śravan*, praying, etc. Only those who speak Hari-kathā must have humility; only those who worship Deities must have humility—this is not true. Whatever devotional process you practise, you should have humility. It is necessary to practise humility in every devotional practice. The more humility practising devotees can bring out in themselves, the greater Vaiṣṇavs they are.

People can write articles on humility, desiring no honour, feeling low; people can write a thesis on it, they can give speeches on it, but if they do not have a drop of poorness,

humility, tolerance and desiring no honour in themselves, then they are not Vaiṣṇavs. It is easy to speak about humility, but to become humble is another thing, it is difficult to practise it. “*Vaiṣṇava havāra chhila bāda sādha, ṭṛṇād api sunīcha śloke pade gela bādha.* I had a great desire to become a Vaiṣṇav, but there is a great stumbling block—the śloka ‘*ṭṛṇād api sunīcha*’.” If you want to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness in your life, you must practise these three qualities. It is necessary to practise humility. It is easy to write books and give lectures about it, but it is difficult to practise it. The more humility, poorness comes to you, the more you will want no honour for yourself—the more opportunity you will get to progress on the path of Vaiṣṇavism. It is necessary to practise these three qualities your whole life. It is very easy to take a *danḍa* (*sannyās*), to wear saffron clothes, but it is necessary to practise humility your whole practising life. You must pray to Śrī Guru and Vaiṣṇavs for their mercy to become poor, low, and tolerant.



Ideal of preaching Hari-kathā

Affectionate chaste disciples do not stay anywhere except for the house of their guru. When you go for preaching, you have to stay at other places—in this case, wherever you have to stay, you must bring there the atmosphere of your guru's house, *āśram* and temple. Whenever you stay in the preaching field, you must remember that my Lord is there, my Gurudev is there, and I have service. You should always remember this. Vaiṣṇavas do not stay in the universe of Kali—they live in the abode of the Lord's service, in the abode of their Guru's service. When you go for preaching, you must have the feeling that you are in the temple. Just as every morning at the temple, you give the class, chant *kīrtans*, do *maṅgal-ārati*, *Tulasī-parikramā*, serve the Lord, in the same way you must live your life in the service of the Lord, in Hari-kathā, in lectures and *kīrtans* when you go for preaching. You must preserve all these eternally practised devotional activities following all rules and regulations. You should practise preserving this mood as much as possible, then you will progress in your own devotional practising life; otherwise you can be attacked by illusion (*Māyā*). Collecting items for service is not the main purpose of preaching. If you become concerned only with money, you will be removed from Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You must create the atmosphere of the temple as far as it is possible, and stay within it.

When you go for preaching, you must create an atmosphere favourable to devotion. When you give a class and chant *kīrtans* yourself, then you will encourage people around you who

have faith to join this *kīrtan*. It is very important to create the atmosphere of a temple for self-preservation, i.e. to protect your service and devotional practice. We can see that *sannyāsīs* always sit amidst fire blazing on all four sides. Why do they sit amidst blazing fire? They do it not to collapse from cold. This fire is *Hari-kathā*, *kīrtan*, service to the Lord, and service to the guru. You must progress in your practising life keeping the sacrificial fire of your service ablaze. What is this fire? It is service intelligence; keeping yourself busy with preaching to give benefit to yourself and others. Going to preach alone is not advantageous—it is advantageous to preach in the association of Vaiṣṇavs. You should not stay without Vaiṣṇavs. It is your bad fortune if you go for preaching on your own.

When you go for preaching, you should always keep the mood that I have come here for the service of the Lordships—i.e. service of Śrī Guru, Śrī Govinda, Śrī Gopināth, Śrī Madan-mohan. During preaching, you go to many places where you will find neither a temple nor people who have faith. That is why it is necessary to create a temple.



“Devotees’ surrender at the time of initiation”

Initiation (*dikṣā*) means self-surrender. “I am yours”—this feeling awakens at the time of initiation. “*Kṛṣṇa, tomāra hāi’ yadi bale ekabāra, māyā-bandha haite kṛṣṇa tāre kare pāra.* ‘Kṛṣṇa, I am Yours—if you say it even once, Kṛṣṇa can rescue you from the bondage of Māyā.’” (Cc. 2.22.33) Independence, ego is given up—one gets a new life at the time of initiation. I am a *brāhmaṇ*, I am from a low caste, I am good, I am bad—there are no such feelings. I have now become yours—such mood must awaken. O Kṛṣṇa! I am Your servant, I am Your slave. Whatever service You want to engage me in, this is the service I want. Whatever ego, pride, requisition (desire to lord over) I have, I must submit everything at the time of initiation. It is necessary to submit yourself at the time of initiation, it means you should give yourself completely. To mould yourself according to His wish, you must throw yourself at His holy lotus feet. He can do with me what He pleases.

“dikṣā-kāle bhakta kare ātma-samarpaṇa”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 3.4.192)

Those who want to become a devotee, who want to become initiated into the path of devotion, leave all conceptions and feelings of “I” and “mine,” and pray, “Accept me, take me. My happiness, unhappiness, good and bad—all is yours now. Guide me, show me the path.” You must surrender to the holy lotus feet of Sri Gurupadpadma without any hesitation. To be initiated

means to submit yourself. The more one can submit oneself, the more successful one will be in their life. “*Sei kāle kṛṣṇa tāre kare ātmasama, sei deha kare tāra chidānanda-maya.* At this time Kṛṣṇa takes [the surrendered soul] as His own and transforms his body into a transcendental body.” (Cc, 3.192-193) “Ātma-sama” means ‘one’s very own’—does it mean one gets four arms or six arms? No. Kṛṣṇa makes one fit for His service, i.e. the more you surrender, the more He hijacks you. No kind of stiffness, objection, or obstruction will come then. “*Dikṣā-kāle bhakta kare ātma-samarpaṇa*—at the time of initiation, devotees surrender themselves fully”—it means devotees leave all materialism, material false ego, material attachments and establish themselves in servitude to Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is an ideal initiation. To reach such ideal, it is necessary to pay the price. The higher price you pay for it, the more successful you will be. You should be prepared to give what you have. If you want to pass B.A., you get there step by step. One does not attain perfection just by taking initiation. It is necessary to gather the mercy of Gurudev at the time of initiation and practise after that. The more seriously and sincerely you can follow your Gurudev and his desire, the more successful or benefitted you will be.

There is no service, no practising life without initiation. Chanting the Holy Name on some beads, worshipping Deities, singing *kīrtans* without initiation—this is unscientific. “*Ādau guru-padāśrayah*—first, take shelter of the guru.” If you take shelter at the feet of your guru, then everything is perfect—this is not so. This is only the beginning. Getting enrolled into a college does not mean passing the final exam, it is only an opportunity to pass it.

What happens after initiation? “*Śravaṇa-kīrtana-jale karaye sechana.* Nourish the creeper of your devotion with the water of *śravaṇ* and *kīrtan*.” (Cc, 2.19.152) It is necessary to practise hearing and chanting, worship Deities and do service. You

must serve with love, affection, extracting loving devotion from your very heart. You must always think about what makes Him happy. You must be anxious to make Him happy and always be alert and conscious of His happiness. Sacrifice your selfish interests for His happiness, serve for His happiness. He does not accept service from those who have no initiation and no mercy. Whether He accepts service or not, this is up to Him; from our side, we should sent the application (prayer). Initiation is a method of practising spiritual life. If you do not follow this scientific rule, you will not get any result. Initiation is the first duty in one's spiritual life.



Subtle difference between *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga*

It is necessary to be aware of the difference between *jñāna-yoga* (pursuit of knowledge) and *bhakti-yoga* (pursuit of devotion). *Jñāna-yoga* means worshipping the Supreme Brahma (impersonal form of the Lord). Practice of devotion is different from practice of knowledge. *Jñāna-yoga* practice features reading scriptures, various stages of meditation, practice of renunciation, giving lectures on the scriptures, etc.

If there is nothing except following the scriptures and intellectualism, then there is a seed of *jñāna-yoga* in your heart. Practice of *jñāna-yoga* features living in seclusion, wearing *kaupīn*, attaining *samādhi* and following the scriptures. This is not very bad, but this is all practice of *jñāna-yoga* (pursuit of knowledge). There are two sides of Rāma Kṛṣṇa Mission. One side is a mission, and the other side is a temple. Those who do missionary work, they do relief work, work in hospitals, schools, colleges, etc.; and those who stay at the temple, study scriptures and worship the Supreme Brahma. Practice of renunciation does not bring joy or pleasure—it brings the vision of the impersonal form of the Lord, i.e. the practitioner becomes dissolved in Brahma. Those who set this goal in their life, have the tendency to study books. By one's tendency you can understand who is qualified for *karma-yoga* (pursuit of material gain), who is qualified for *jñāna-yoga* (pursuit of knowledge), and who is qualified for *bhakti-yoga* (pursuit of devotion). Transcendental scientists determine which direction one feels taste for. Those who have tendency for studying,

practising renunciation, and living in seclusion attain the vision of the supreme impersonal God—*jñāna-yoga* is about becoming dissolved in the impersonal, formless Brahma ('*aham brahmāsmi*').

There are many people who are established in devotion, and they follow another path. *Bhakti-yoga* means “*śravaṇ, kīrtan, smaraṇ, pāda-sevana, archana, vandana, ātma-nivedana*, etc.” Many who have this inclination to study embark on the path of devotion and read only such scriptures as *Gītā, Bhāgavatam*, etc. *Bhakti-yoga* means hearing from the mouth of the guru. Reading books or studying is not *bhakti-yoga*. Studying means reading on your own, but one must listen to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* from a living personality. Gurudev tells about the realisations, feelings, conceptions related to the Lord pouring his very heart into it, and when you listen to these instructions, then it is devotion. There is no place for studying books in the line of devotion. One must listen to the guidance and instruction from the holy mouth of Gurudev or from the mouths of those who are dear to him. Do not twist the oral instructions to suit your liking. Follow and practise what Gurudev tells properly. Those who practise *kīrtan* (chanting the Holy Name) realise Gurudev's words in their hearts. Speak about whatever you have heard from the mouth of Śrī Guru. There is no secluded meditation in the line of devotion. *Kīrtan* means speaking Hari-kathā. *Kīrtan* can be singing songs, giving a lecture or writing books. If you want to practise such *kīrtan*, it is necessary to have listeners. Those who want to stay alone, privately, cannot practise *kīrtan*. If you want to practise *kīrtan*, there must be listeners who have faith. If you want to stay with such listeners, you should not live on your own. Staying in unfavourable association is not devotion. It is necessary to stay in good association, in the association of those who have faith. “*Ekākī āmāra nāhi pāya bala Harināma-saikīrtane*. I do not get any strength by chanting the Holy Name on my own.” It is not good to stay alone and practise *kīrtan* on

your own—you can practise meditation in this way, but not *kīrtan*. Those who practise *kīrtan* come to Gurudev and listen to his *kathā*. One of the practices of devotion is also remembering. Remembering what? Remembering the Holy Name, qualities, pastimes, associates, etc. Remembrance comes only after hearing and practising (*śravaṇ*, *kīrtan*). “*Kīrtana-prabhāve smaraṇa haibe*. The effect of chanting is remembrance.” In *jñāna-yoga* mediation is practised, and in *bhakti-yoga*, one practises remembrance—this remembrance comes through hearing and chanting. We are not saying that meditation in *jñāna-yoga* is not a means to achieve the goal, but in *bhakti-yoga*, after remembrance one should practise *archan*, i.e. serve or take care of a Deity.

Those who want to stay in a temple of devotees, should be intent on hearing, chanting and Deity service. This is the practising life of aspiring devotees. Rejection, renunciation and staying away from everyone is not a practise of *bhakti-yoga*. Those who want service to the Lord, love for the Lord, devotion for the Lord, must go along with *śravaṇ* and *kīrtan*. If somebody embarks on the path of devotion, but has a tendency towards renunciation, reading books, and debates, then they do not have proper and complete devotional background or nature. There is no alloy in causeless and exclusive devotion. Practising *bhakti-yoga*, *rāja-yoga*, studying scriptures is mixed devotion. The limbs of exclusive devotion are only *śravaṇ*, *kīrtan*, *smaraṇ*, *pāda-sevana*, *archana*, *vandana*, *ātma-nivedana*, etc. Many practise *bhakti-yoga* adulterating it with *jñāna-yoga* (knowledge-seeking) or *rāja-yoga* (meditation), they open schools and also give Hari-kathā lectures. This is alloyed *karma-yoga*. In exclusive devotion, there are no adulterants. One's taste depends on one's fortune; the ultimate result or benefit one gets depends on their previously acquired nature or background. If you get the mercy of powerful great souls, they can change your previously acquired nature and tendency to adulterate and give you exclusive devotion.

If *jīva* souls can accept the causeless and genuine mercy of devotees, they will get these great devotees' mercy, association and blessing, they will be inspired by their ideal and guidance; then a great fortune will arise for them—they will be able to follow this path of pure devotion. There is no adulteration of any kind in exclusive devotion or devotion devoid of any mundane contamination.

There are many kinds of practising devotees—practitioners of devotion mixed with pursuit of knowledge, practitioners of devotion mixed with pursuit of material benefit, practitioners of devotion mixed with pursuit of supernatural powers, and practitioners of exclusive devotion. The channel of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar where we are is the channel of pure devotion. Attaining the mercy of pure devotion means attaining exclusive devotion. The highest attainment in *bhakti-yoga* is the Supreme Personality of God. This devotion means practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness—there is no question of practising scriptural study. Faith is a faculty of the mind—devotion is active, and *śravanī, kīrtan, archan*, etc. are the activities of devotion. Gurudev hints at how to practise devotional life, and those who can grasp and accept his hints, progress on the path of pure devotion. Those who are intelligent, can understand that exclusive devotion is completely different from devotion mixed with material pursuits and devotion mixed with knowledge-seeking. Service to Kṛṣṇa-chandra is possible only through exclusive devotion. The alert practitioners of *bhakti-yoga* follow the Royal Road carefully, they do not get diverted to any other direction. Those who want to get the highest benefit must be clever. "I accept what I have heard"—this will not do. You need good fortune, a great good fortune. Not many people have this fortune—many may come close to pure devotion, but it is very difficult to attain exclusive devotion with spontaneous love.

“Kṛṣṇa is the only Controller, all others are His servants”

Vrajendra-nandan Śrī Kṛṣṇa is worshippable, and all others are worshippers. He is the object of service, and all are His servants.

“ekale īśvara kṛṣṇa, āra saba bhṛtya
yāre yaiche nāchāya, se taichhe kare nr̄tya”

“Lord Kṛṣṇa alone is the supreme controller, and all others are His servants. They dance in whichever way He makes them dance.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 1.5.142)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is everyone’s object of service—He is the only worshippable Person, everybody is striving to serve Him. Some pick flowers, some strings flower garlands, some worship the Deity, some cook, some chant *kīrtan*, some go on collection, some sweep, some wash the dishes, some distribute *prasād*—everyone contributes to His happiness. Everyone does different kinds of service according to their individual qualification and taste. All *jīva* souls are His servants and maidservants, and everyone engages in different services of the Lord, that is why there is no conflict among servitors. There is no quarrel, rivalry, envy and jealousy towards each other. Vrajendra-nandan Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of all Lords and all are His servants. If everyone has such a vision, then there will be no rivalry, envy, fighting and quarrelling. “All are the Lord’s servants.” Therefore, do not criticise or offend anyone, do not be jealous of anyone, do not

hate, envy or spite anyone. Those who have become firmly fixed in servitude to Kṛṣṇa, do not have any kind of separate vision. Vaiṣṇavas think that everyone is a creature of the Lord. King of heaven Indra, God of Moon Chandra, God of Sun Sūrya, God of Wind Varuṇa, et.al. all serve the Lord. “*Prabhura ārati kare chandra o tapana*. Moon and Sun do the *ārati* of the Lord.” There are so many demigods and demigoddesses, but their purpose is one. However, everybody’s function is not the same. Demigods, demigoddesses, Brahmā, Śiva, governors of different planets, et.al.—they all do their appointed service. They are all servants, therefore there is no need to hate or neglect anyone. If someone treats the Lord’s servant or maidservant with contempt, bullies, ignore or criticises them, then all this abuse falls on the Lord’s neck. If you hate, ignore or disrespect some god, this offends worshippable Lord Kṛṣṇa. Pure Vaiṣṇavas never offend anyone; because if there is hatred, offences, ignoring, etc., there cannot be servitude to the Supreme Lord. If realisation of servitude to the Lord awakens within a *jīva* soul, it can never criticise or offend anyone. Therefore,

“*kāhāre nā kare nindā, ‘kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa’ bale
ajaya chaitanya sei jinibeka hele*”

“If somebody always chants the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa without offending or criticising anyone, unconquerable Chaitanya becomes conquered.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-bhāgavata, 2.10.312)

Treating those who give cow dung, who wash the dishes, with hatred or negligently, is a mistake. They are servants—if you have this vision, you cannot make offence to anyone. Therefore, devotees of Kṛṣṇa pray to everyone, “Please give me love for Vrajendra-nandan Śrī Kṛṣṇa.” You all have love, or devotion, for the Lord—please give me such love, or devotion, too. Vraja Devīs went to Chīraghāṭ and prayed to Kātyāyanī

Devī for Kṛṣṇa-bhakti, Kṛṣṇa-prema and Kṛṣṇa-sevā (devotion, love, and service to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa). Their ardent prayer was, "O Devī! Give us devotion to the son of cowherd Nanda, please give us love for Him." Vraja Devīs gave honour to the demigods and demigoddesses. Śrī Rādhārāṇī does the *pūjā* of Kṛṣṇa pretending that She is doing the *pūjā* of Sūrya. She does not show disrespect to Sūrya (the God of Sun)—She prays to him for Kṛṣṇa-prema. Vraja-bāsīs and Vaiṣṇavas do not dismiss Lord Śīva—they pray to him, "O Śambhu! You always chant the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa with your five mouths. You have so much devotion and love for Kṛṣṇa, please give us such love too." In Vṛndāvan there is Gopeśvar Śīva-Pārvatī, in Mathurā Go-Karneśvar, et. al. Devotees pray to them, "We have no devotion, please give us some devotion." Vaiṣṇavas do not fight against the peaceful. Those who have no sense about what is what, fight, criticise and debate with others. Great Vaiṣṇavas prohibit to worship demigods and demigoddesses considering them independent controllers because to consider them independent controllers is the cause of a Nāma-aparādha. All gods and demigoddesses do their service on the order of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and it is necessary to give them honour, but you should not worship them separately considering them independent controllers. Those in whose hearts Kṛṣṇa resides, never worship anyone considering them independent controllers. Those who have connection with Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa cannot conflict with anyone—they cannot hate any demigod, demigoddess or human. If you criticise someone, it is an offence. There is one beautiful point in devotion—those who do not see servitude to Kṛṣṇa in others, are not Vaiṣṇavas; a Vaiṣṇav is he who sees servitude to Kṛṣṇa in others. A proper servitor is he who cannot hate those who give cow dung or who clean bathrooms. Such devotees neither worship anyone considering them independent controllers, nor do they insult

anyone. Knowing this conception, it is necessary to bring this mood, this judgement, this vision to our own lives. If you have such mood, you will not deviate from the object of your worship. There is Bhūteśvar, Gokarṇeśvar in Mathurā, Śrīla Prabhupād kept Kṣetrapāl Śiva in Śrī Yogapīṭh (Śrī Dhām Māyāpur). Śrīla Gurudev kept Śrī Sadā Śiva Gaṅgādhara in our temple. They are all servants of Kṛṣṇa, they dance and sing the glories of Gaura. In Nīlāchala, there is Yameśvar, Nīlakanṭha, Kapālamochana, and others serving Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar. Vaiṣṇavas do not dismiss all these Śivas. Religion of Vaiṣṇavas is so wonderful, but it is very difficult to follow it. This is a religion of love. Vaiṣṇavas do not hate, do not conflict with anyone, there is no rivalry among them. Where there is love, there are no conflicts, no envy. There is no hatred in the hearts of Vaiṣṇavas. There is no place for hatred and animosity in their behaviour. Kamsa is such a great adversary, but Vaiṣṇavas pay obeisance to him. Why? Because Kamsa propagated Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's glories in an exceptional way. Those who have lower qualification, who have not entered higher planes of Vaiṣṇavism, often hate others, insult others. Those who are engulfed by love for Kṛṣṇa, cannot hate anyone. Śrī Gaurasundar "embraced even meat-eaters (*āchaṇḍāle dhari deya kola*)"—He lovingly embraced everyone. There is no opposition in the religion of love, there is no offence, no animosity—the more you can practise this religion of love, the more fortunate you are. This is how forgiveness will come to you. Those who are situated on the plane of divine love, do not hate wicked people. Many say that there are thieves in the temple, it is a den of bad people—how can I stay there? Why do great souls keep such people? They keep them there to reform such naughty people, to give them benefit. Such is their transcendental loving vision. This is how we should mould our life.

Śrī Gurudev is the center of the disciple's heart

Śrī Gurudev is the only shelter for a disciple. Those who have become disciples live in complete adherence to their guru. If one retains independence, they cannot be called a 'disciple'—they can take the mantra, they can take initiation, but if they do not accept guidance or disciplining of Śrī Gurudev, they cannot be called a real disciple. Gurudev has a vast wealth. Those who are born into his lineage, can get the right for his wealth. When one is born into a king's family, one becomes a prince. In the same way, when one is born into Gurudev's family or lineage, they become his disciple, or child. Gurudev's wealth is not temples, buildings, houses, money; his wealth is faith, devotion and love. When one is born into his family, one gets the right for all this priceless spiritual wealth. If you want to keep away from the service of such Gurudev, it means your fortune is very bad. If you feel any lack of faith towards Gurudev, then the door to the domain of devotion will be closed for you because if Gurudev is unhappy with you, then there is no way Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar will forgive you. When Jagāi and Mādhāi hit Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar called His Sudarśan-chakra, but Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu forgave them and pacified Śrī Gaurasundar. It is not so easy to understand Gurudev. You can understand small things, but it is difficult to understand Gurudev—he is grand, he is great.

Gurudev and a Vaiṣṇav is not one and the same, just as a father is not the same as an uncle. If something happens to the son, if he dies, the father becomes devastated, he feels agonising

pain, but the uncle or a neighbour may feel only a little pain.

If you run down the path of devotion at a very high speed, you can meet an accident and all your ten-year's practice will be destroyed. A car can be going at a very high speed, but if it meets an accident on the road, it will be crushed to pieces. Similarly, it is very difficult to progress on the path of devotion—it is very easy to go down the hill, but it is difficult to go uphill. It takes so much time to go up, but you can go down within a moment.

Śrīla Prabhupād used to say, "You have been given a ticket to Delhi, but before reaching Delhi you get off in Bardhaman. This is your loss. People want to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but when they do not get the result, they get injured. You leave your home and come here, but if you cannot get love and devotion, if you cannot serve properly, then your life passes in vain."

Gurudev can save his disciple from fire. It is difficult to understand how and when one does service, but if a disciple comes across some thorns, this is very distressing. *Vaiṣṇava-aparādhā* is a great hindrance on the path of devotion. Do I recognise who is a Vaiṣṇav and who is not? Therefore, if you behave inappropriately with Vaiṣṇavs, you will face thorns on the path of devotion. What is there left if you commit an offence at the feet of Gurudev? Your devotional life will burn to ashes.



"Jaya jaya-ujjvala-rasa sarva-rasa-sāra: glory to madhura-rasa, the best of all rasas"

Whatever is natural for you, whatever your service is—that is the highest for you, that is the beauty.

"sva-dharme nidhanam śreyah paradharma bhayāvahah"

"Even death in the discharge of one's own duty is better, for to perform another's is dangerous."

(*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, 3.35)

The highest *ujjvala-rasa* (paramour love) is the paramount mellow, or devotion. If one has the right to engage in the *madhura-rasa* service (paramour love) and if, when one renders service in this devotional mellow and joy, happiness automatically comes to their heart, then this is good for them. There are different devotional service moods—neutral (*sānta*), servitude (*dāsyā*), parenthood (*vātsalya*) and friendship (*sakhā*)—if you have qualification for any of these moods and serve in your capacity, that is good for you. However, if a person who is qualified to worship Deities says, "I will now do *kīrtan-sevā*," this is not reasonable; at the same time, if somebody is qualified to chant *kīrtan*, they do not have to go to serve in the kitchen. Whatever service is required or one hankers for in their spiritual form, that service is good for them. It is not right to imitate others. Gurudev knows very well what service is suitable for whom. If one does a particular service according to their pure natural propensity and following Gurudev's instruction, that service is good for them. Such service gives joy and brings supreme benefit to the soul.

Although *pārakīya-rasa* (paramour relationship) is paramount rasa, Śrīdām, Sudām and others do not leave their *sakyā-rasa* (friendship) to come and join *śrigāra-rasa* (assist in the conjugal pastimes). Śrī Śrī Nanda Mahāraj does not give up his *vātsalya* mood to serve Kṛṣṇa in His *madhura-rasa* (consorthood). Therefore, it is not right to imitate others' devotional practices. Why is *madhura-rasa* called the highest *rasa*, above *śānta*, *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, and *vātsalya*? There is one special and esoteric difference in it.

Many religious moralists consider the paramour pastimes of Vṛndāvan wrong and abominable. Abandoning the religion of adolescence and married life, young unmarried girls run behind Kṛṣṇa to serve Him—this is not beautiful and not appealing. Society creates confusion promoting such vision. Such lower plane moralists cannot appreciate the sweetness of the transcendental paramour relationship with the Lord. They cannot conceive how great this relationship, this mood, is. Such lower-plane moralists sit at the back and make offences, that is why when great souls proclaim this *rasa* to be the best and rational ("Jaya jaya-ujjvala-rasa sarva-rasa-sāra: all glory to *madhura-rasa*, the best of all *rasas*"), they also give a warning. Śrī Uddhav Mahārāj widely and clearly proclaimed the superiority of the *pārakīya-rasa* (paramour relationship). He aspired for the footdust of those who worship this *pārakīya-rasa*. Did Śrī Uddhav Mahārāj not want the footdust of the *gopīs*? He did—he aspired for their footdust because they are servitors of *pārakīya-rasa*. They have left the path of Āryans, moral codes, Vedas, and served the ideal of *pārakīya-rasa*. That is why they are the greatest jewels of all possible relationships with the Lord. Therefore, O moralists! Do not consider them vile and abominable. To explain this to low moralists, great souls give a loud warning. Such *pārakīya-rasa* devotees are not small, they are not condemnable or vile—they are the greatest, the highest servitors.

Those whom Gurudev engages in this service, are the highest souls. Wherever Gurudev places me—be it within the practice of Deity worship, the practice of *kīrtan*, the practice of hearing, etc.—if I try to do it with heart and soul, it is good for me. But I want to do something else besides or instead of that service—this is where the problem comes. Gurudev told me to practise *kīrtan*, but I stop practising *kīrtan* and come to give the class because if I give a class, I will be given a flower garland, I will get applause and praise. Gurudev gives somebody cooking service, but the person leaves cooking service and instead goes to dress Deities. This is not right. Gurudev knows who should do which service. If you follow your mind and leave the service that is suitable for you according to your nature, then service cannot be done properly in this way. Gurudev wants to make a water pot, but I say that I will not be a water pot, I want to be a cooking pot. This is wrong.

Whatever service one may be told to do by Gurudev, do not criticise it, otherwise you will be in trouble. Do service according to your natural disposition. Do not criticise or take others' service, it is not good to imitate. However, if you follow Gurudev, that is good. Gurudev knows what spiritual nature each person has. Therefore, if you follow his instruction, it is good for you. He said what is necessary to do, but I do not like it—this is out of question.



Srī Srī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's service by Srī Srī Nitāi's mercy

“nitāiyer karuṇā habe, vraje rādhā-kṛṣṇa pābe,
dhara nitāiyer-charana dukhāni”

“When Nitai bestows His mercy you will reach Radha-Krsna in Vraja. Grasp Nitai’s feet!”
(Śrīla Narottam-gītī)

How does one get mercy of Śrī Nitāichāḍ? Śrī Nityānanda is the father of *saikīrtan*, He is the presiding Deity of *saikīrtan*. If you get taste for *kīrtan*, then you get the mercy of Nitāi. ‘*Kīrtan*’ does not mean gratification of one’s own senses—when Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu hears chanting of the Holy Name, He becomes very happy. It is a matter of a great fortune and it a very great thing to become qualified to give joy to Śrī Nitāichāḍ, to attain the right to chant the Holy Name, and to feel happiness when chanting the Holy Name. This happiness comes by His mercy. If Nityānanda Prabhu relishes someone’s *kīrtan*, if He likes it, if He becomes happy, then His happiness is reflected onto the person chanting *kīrtan*, i.e. the person who is chanting will also feel happy. ‘*Kīrtan*’ is not some melody, tune, or showing off one’s skills. If you can make Śrī Nitāichāḍ happy through the medium of *kīrtan*—if He is happy with your *kīrtan*—you can attain Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, i.e. you can become qualified for *mādhurya-sevā* in the *śrīgāra-rasa* of Vṛndāvan. Those who feel taste or ecstasy chanting the Holy Name can get Vraja’s Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa through their chanting. Exclusive followers of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar get

service to Vraja Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa when they chant *kīrtan*. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas' service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda is noteworthy. They please the senses of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda through *kīrtan*, through the *ārati* of Their Lordships. This is a very esoteric service. It is impossible to get service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda without exclusive devotion to the *gopīs*. Exclusive associates of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar always try to make Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda happy, always perform Their *ārati* (worship) through *kīrtan*, as ordained by Gaura. 'Getting mercy of Nitāī' means to become qualified to taste the ecstasy of *kīrtan*. One can attain the advanced service in *ujjvala-rasa* (consorthood) that cannot be attained without exclusive adherence to the *gopīs*—through singing and service via *kīrtans* as ordained by Śrī Gaurasundar. If you can make Nitāī happy through your exclusive devotion to Him, then you can get the service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. This is an amazing and esoteric secret. It is extremely difficult and very fortunate to get service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda under the guidance of the *gopīs*. Those who possess the ego of a male, can never accept such guidance. Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda are served and worshipped through *kīrtan* (chanting Their Holy Names)—They are attracted by *kīrtan*. Many practising devotees do not know this esoteric and secret truth.

Such *kīrtan* is not singing songs—it is not some elaborate singing with a nice tune, rhythm, measure, tempo. Gauḍīya *guru-varga*, especially Śrīla Prabhupād completely reject such things. Singing and rolling on the ground is a physical exercise, pretence—it is meant to impress others. In East Bengal, many people fall into such ecstasy and start rolling on the ground. Śrīla Prabhupād exposed all this hypocrisy. '*Kīrtan*' is not such hypocrisy and show.

'Nitāiyer karuṇā habe, Vraje Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa pābe; if you get Nitāī's mercy, you will get Vraja Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa—where is the link

between the two? Vraja Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's service is not possible without the prior *śrīgāra-rasa* (preparation to the *rasa-līlā*). 'Nitāīyer karuṇā habe, getting the mercy of Nitāī' means if you can make Him happy with your mellow of *kīrtan*, you will get service of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vraja.

vyatītya bhāvanā-vartma yaś chamatkāra-bhāra-bhūḥ
hṛdi sattvojjvale bāḍham svadate sa raso mataḥ

"That which is beyond imagination, heavy with wonder and relished in the heart shining with goodness—such is known as rasa."
(Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu)

Ecstasy of *kīrtan* is born from a lustrous heart, purified by pure goodness. This is a very high attainment. Unless pure goodness appears in one's heart, the ecstasy of *kīrtan* can never appear there. With the mercy of Nitāī, it is not possible to have this ecstasy of *kīrtan* manifest in one's heart. Without the mercy of this Nitāī, it is impossible to get the service of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vraja. Those who accumulate the mercy of Nitāī, please Him through their *kīrtan* and can receive service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vraja.



Guaranteed benefit of the service to the Lord

“tomāra samsāre kariba sevana
 nahiba phalera bhāgī”

“I will serve Your family and never claim any result for myself.”
(Śaraṇāgati)

Always serve. If you can serve Śrī Hari, Guru, Vaiṣṇavs with your body, mind, and speech according to your capacity and qualification, you must definitely get eternal spiritual benefit. Those who serve sincerely, without duplicity, are dear to the Lord; and those serve going beyond their very capacity, are intimate, dearmost associates of the Lord. It is necessary to always have enthusiasm, firmness and patience in service.

“utsāhān niśchayād dhairyāt, tat tat karma-pravartanāt”

“One must first have firm determination, firm faith, and follow regulative principles.”

(Śrī Upadeśāmṛta, 3rd verse)

The Lord is dear and near. If you do not serve this dearmost Lord, what will you do then? If you do not serve through hearing, chanting, taking the Holy Name, etc. will you not be forced to grasp onto material life? Will you not try to increase the business at your shop? Will you not hold your children closer to your chest? There is no other way for the *jīva* souls except for continuous loving serving to the Lord. It is good to be dissatisfied or humble in one's service. There is nothing bad about it. We can do so much service, but it is very little compared to the amount of service necessary. I must do even more service. The service I did is quite big, what else is needed? Such mood is not good. Compared to the amount of service that is needed to

be done, what I did is very little. Such mood is good. It is good to feel dissatisfaction with your service—it does not go against devotion, dissatisfaction is favourable to devotion. I have done some service, but my aspiration is not fulfilled by that. Such mood allows you to progress towards more service.

I have done all this service, but what is the use? Whatever I am doing, I am not getting any result. Those who think like this have a lack of faith in their heart. This goes against devotion. Such distrust and a lack of faith bring about fickleness and, later on, atheism. When a lack of faith comes to one's heart, this is the death of one's spiritual life. When you take a break from the sacrificial fire of the Lord's service, will you not embrace material life even stronger? You cannot spend your money, intelligence, speech for the service of the Lord. That is because you have so much attachment or illusion towards material family life. Serve the family of Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Śrī Śyāmasundar, Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar are the Lords of love. If you take the Lord as your own, if such feeling comes to you, then you will feel joy and happiness serving Him. Śrīla Gurudev spoke once about Śrīpād Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇ Prabhu. "We feel moved to see Prabhu's service to the Deities. Just as a mother always makes new preparations for her son, he always cooks for the Lordships with much care. He is very tolerant and serves with heart. He will be rewarded for his service. Many give the class, speak about the conception, write articles, many can recite large quotes by heart; but they have a very long way to go to reach the Lord."

Many come to have *darśan* of the Lordships and, having got it, go away. But how does one take *darśan* of the Lordships? The Lord knows who has come and what they have come to see. He does not look at anybody—if one day the Lord just once casts His merciful glance upon anybody, their life becomes glorious.

The very heart of devotion is life in search for Krsna's happiness

Seeing material old age, diseases and death, Lord Buddha left His house to perform austerity. While He was meditating, He achieved *nirvāṇa*, or liberation. He showed this world the path to liberation or the path to great *nirvāṇa*. However, devotees do not want liberation. They accept any misery with a smile if that makes the Lord happy.

"All the distress I encounter in Your service is my greatest happiness."

(*Saranagati* 16.4)

Devotees aspire for unhappiness to make the Lord happy. They are ready to even cry for Him. They do not want to be freed from such crying.

There are very few people who want unhappiness. We chant the Holy Name of the Lord, we serve the Lord so that we can live happily. I do not want any unhappiness to come. I am serving the Lord so that my health stays good, so that I do not lack anything, so that I do not get any diseases. Those who pray for their health, pray for their offsprings' health as well. In this world, people are busy to become released from all these various miseries. I agree to accept even unhappiness for the happiness of the Lord—such devotees are very rare.

"Tomāra sevāya, duḥkha haya yata, seo ta' parama sukha. All the

distress I encounter in Your service is my greatest happiness." It is not easy to become established within this conception. I do not want liberation, I do not want *nirvāṇa*—you can say this in a lecture, you can write it in an article, you can advise this to others, it is easy; but it is not so easy to practise this. This is the natural state of pure devotees. When a mother cooks for her son, she suffers from the smoke coming from the stove, but still she cooks religiously every day because she is a mother and she loves her son. There is love, there is affection, there is attachment. When you love someone, you heart and soul welcome any austerity for their sake. I want devotion, I do not want liberation—people say this, advise this, but it is not so easy to bring such a mood into one's own life. A myna bird can learn to say "Hare Kṛṣṇa" and chant the name "Hare Kṛṣṇa" as a slogan. When somebody comes, it can call them, "Come, come"; but if a cat comes and tries to throttle it, it will not be able to chant "Hare Kṛṣṇa" any more—at that time, it will only keep crying out of pain and fear. In the same way, when you sit and give a class, you say, "I do not want enjoyment, I do not want liberation", but when you face some unhappiness, you will say, "O Lord! Please take this unhappiness away!"—then you forget the profound importance of the *śloka* "na dhanam na janam na sundaram kavitaṁ vā." However, we must understand that those who do not forget it, are much more fortunate. It sounds so great to mould one's life according to these words and to become established in it, but it is not so easy to be able to do it.

Even if I have no qualification, it is necessary to hear about it and to speak about it. Because I cannot do it, why will I speak about it? This is not so. If you keep speaking about it, if you keep listening about it, you will get benefit—this desire to follow it will awaken in you. You must progress down the path to the ideal gradually.

Śrīla Vamśīdās Bābājī Mahārāj used to say, "You have fallen down. The person who is writing it has realised it." You practised *kīrtan*, you give lectures—'karma-kāṇḍa, jñāna-kāṇḍa kevala viṣera bhāṇḍa, both selfish life and knowledge seeking are merely two pots with poison.' This is so important! He who wrote it, knows it! We give lectures, we make speeches, but when we are on our own, we behave differently. It is easy to preach, to say, but it is difficult to practise these things, it is difficult to apply these things in one's own life. It is easy to give speeches, to write articles. It is easy to sing the words of *kīrtans* with some tune, rhythm, etc., but very few people actually pay attention to the profound meaning and mood of the *kīrtans*. To tell the truth, most people do not pay attention to this.

"prabhu! tava pada-yuge mora nivedana
nāhi māgi deha-sukha, vidyā, dhana, jana"

"O Lord! I am pray humbly at your holy feet—I do not want any pleasures of this body, knowledge, wealth or admirers."
(Śrīla Bhaktivinod-gīti)

You can sing the words of *kīrtans* all your life, but not identify yourself with the mood of the *kīrtans*. You sing at the *ārati*, you sing the *kīrtans*, but you do not concern yourself with the Lordships. You are concerned with whether people enjoy what they hear or not. You do not care whether the Lordships like it or not. When you are able to feel whether the Lord is happy or not, then it will be pure devotion. We must always keep ourselves engaged in the service of the Lord. Perhaps, I have no right to say this, but it is necessary to hear it. When you keep on hearing about it and speaking about it, you will start wondering about your own qualification. This is advice to one's own self, not for others. Always remember about this.

Scarcity of gurus and disciples in this world

“*tasmād guruṁ prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*”
(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 11.3.21)

“Those who want to get benefit must surrender themselves at the lotus feet of a genuine guru.” Bona fide gurus is a rarity in this world. Those who can accept or follow the order, instruction and advice of a bona fide guru, become disciples. There are many initiating gurus in this world (who can give you a mantra)—when you pay them obeisance (*prāṇam*) and give donation (*prāṇāmī*), their job finishes at this. There are many gurus who vex disciples in this way—there are ancestral gurus, university gurus, material gurus, etc. However, it is very rare to find a spiritual guru. The mercy of a spiritual master brings spiritual benefit. If it is very rare to find such a bona fide guru, then it is virtually impossible to find a proper disciple. Those who only take mantra are not real disciples. It is definitely necessary to take initiation into the mantra to become a proper disciple because one cannot attain perfection as a disciple without accepting the mantra. However, taking mantra from a guru, calling him ‘*paramahāṁsa*’ and giving ‘*jay*’ to him, giving flowers, putting a garland on him, offering him *bhoga*—these are not symptoms of a disciple. “He is my spiritual benefactor”—it is necessary to serve the guru this kind of faith. A symptom of a disciple is following the guru’s order and instruction, keeping the guru happy. The disciple must practise, behave and speak in such a way as to make Gurudev

happy. Serving Gurudev means search for his happiness. Unless there is such a relationship between the guru and the disciple, there can be no spiritual benefit.

I have taken initiation from Gurudev, but I do not follow his order and instruction—when somebody becomes a disciple but behaves and acts like this, it strikes Gurudev's heart, he feels perturbed, troubled by the behaviour of the disciple. Because of such behaviour disciples do not get spiritual benefit. Those who behave contrary to the order and instruction of Gurudev, face many difficulties and experience hellish suffering. On the other hand, those who try to please Gurudev behave and practise in such a way as to satisfy their Gurudev—they never do anything that gives pain to their Guru. Such disciples certainly attain supreme benefit. Proper chaste disciples who follow Gurudev's order, instruction, and guidance, accept it when they are disciplined by Gurudev and never do anything that can distress Gurudev. They quickly progress down the transcendental path. Offenders of the guru show externally that they scatter flowers at his feet, recite poems in his glorification, fight on his behalf—I love Gurudev so much! Gurudev is my near and dear! But internally they behave in such a way that it gives pain to Gurudev. Externally, they show deceitful devotion to Śrī Guru. The number of such disciples who are offensive to the Holy Name, is very big. Just as a bona fide guru is a rarity, so are bona fide disciples. Such a disciple is very rare even among thousands and thousand of disciples. Very few people among those who become disciples have the fortune to attain the qualification of a disciple. A true disciple receives supreme benefit. Nothing can obstruct their path towards peace, happiness and divine love. Deceitful people who keep on displeasing Gurudev with their various inauspicious actions and practises, are moving down the path of total ruination. Because of their deceitful behaviour,

there is nobody who can save them from this inauspicious path. Externally, I have offered *dañdavat pranām* (prostrate obeisance), gave him something to eat, gave him some clothes—you cannot cheat Gurudev in this way. Those who have become proper disciples of their Gurudev, are always, at every moment alert and intent on pleasing their Gurudev. The sight and association of such a disciple brings Gurudev joy and spurs love for the disciple. Many think that Gurudev cannot see through their deceit. Such people are extremely unfortunate. They are bound to be unhappy, such people know no end of troubles in their lives. They become deprived of the genuine guru's shelter. Just as there are very few gurus, there are also very few disciples. Many show externally that they offer flowers to Gurudev's picture, chant his glories, and please Gurudev; but inside they are deceitful, cunning, travellers down the path to hell. They will suffer birth after birth. Deceit will take them to a downfall. Nobody can cheat Gurudev. Those who cheat Gurudev are in a terrible danger and great trouble.

There is no happiness in life in this world or the next world. On the other hand, those who truly accept the life of a disciple, follow the guidance of Gurudev and no doubt get supreme benefit. Those who are cunning, are in a great danger, in a great misery—they are unhappy life after life. If there is no feeling of any relationship with one's Gurudev, there is no spiritual benefit—there is only devilry and wickedness. It is impossible to practise spiritual life or serve the Lord without becoming a proper disciple, neither can you get the Lord if you do not become a disciple. When you start practising and developing the relationship with your Gurudev, you will attain spiritual benefit and progress on the path to the transcendental world.

“Free mixers and non-devotees—two types of bad association.”

Those who do not practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness or serve the Lord are called *asat* (inauspicious, unholy, non-eternal); but those who serve the Supreme Lord are called *sādhu* (holy persons). Hearing, chanting, remembering about the Lord, praying to the Lord, worshipping the Lord, etc. are devotion. To pick flowers, make garlands, grind sandalwood, clean the temple, dress the Deities, cook for the Deities, wash the dishes for the service of the Lord—this is all devotion, this is all service. Those who do not practise even one of the devotional practices (hearing, chanting, remembering, Deity worship), are non-devotees; you should keep away from them. Those who want to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, must give up all such association. Those who are eager to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness must always be alert and make sure no obstacles are created as a result of non-devotees’ association.

Inauspicious are those who steal, engage in debauchery, lie, etc. and have inauspicious character; liars, thieves, foul people are *asādhu* (unsaintly, unholy). Besides that, those who do not practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness (who do not serve the Lord) are also ‘*asat*’. If a person does not practise a single devotional activity (hearing, chanting, remembering, Deity worship, etc.), even if he has a good character, never tells a lie, etc., he is also inauspicious. Unless you give up the association of everything inauspicious, it is not possible to get good association of saintly person.

“asat-saṅga-tyāga—ei vaiṣṇava-āchāra”

“Vaiṣṇavas give up all inauspicious association.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.22.87)

It is necessary to leave the association of all people who do not practise devotion at all—even if they are close family, a son, or a near and dear one. If you associate with those who have no devotion for the Supreme Lord, your devotion will be obstructed—if you associate with them, you will waste your time, money, and your mind will become disturbed. Some practitioners leave home and family and come to stay at the temple where they keep away from all bad association and engage themselves in the service of the Lord. However, even at the temple, there are some who do not hesitate to lie to the Guru and Vaiṣṇavs—you must leave the association of such people as well. Those who stay at the temple but do not join temple programmes, who have no discipline, are also inauspicious, or bad. If you cannot give up such inauspicious association, you will never progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A good doctor prescribes medicine to patients and prohibits them to eat unhealthy food. If you only take the medicine and do not follow the prescribed diet, you will not be cured. Taking medicine and eating bad things will not bring any result. In the same way, in your practising life, you must both follow the rules and regulations and reject that which is prohibited. You practise hearing, chanting, remembering, Deity worship and praying, but you cannot give up bad association—in this way, your practising life will not bring you any benefit. There is less possibility to have bad association at the temple, but if somebody gossips, talks too much, criticises others, discusses others, then their association is bad. They are wasting such a great opportunity in their life! They are greatly unfortunate—they sin and commit offences, that is why they do not feel enthusiasm to practise devotional life, they only suffer from depression, melancholy, danger and trouble.

“strī-saṅgī eka asādhu kṛṣṇābhakta āra.”

“One type of unholly people are those mix with ladies, another

type is non-devotee of Kṛṣṇa.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.22.87)

Those who have no devotion to Kṛṣṇa are inauspicious, unholy. There are wicked people, people who engage in debauchery, who earn money in an dishonest way, who are corrupted—they are all inauspicious. If a person does not practise a single devotional activity (hearing, chanting, remembering, Deity worship, etc.), even if he has a good character, never tells a lie, has high morals, etc., he is also inauspicious. Besides that, those who associate with women are also inauspicious. Both the men who freely mix with women and the women who freely mix with men are inauspicious, unholy. You must keep yourself far from such free-mixers. If you do not reject their association, you will be making an offence to Bhakti Devī—this can never bring any good result. Some householders get married, live a posh, unrestrained life, do not follow the scriptures, and lead a dissolute, wayward life—their association is also considered free mixing. To get married and live an unrestrained life is wrong and ugly. If practitioners associate with such people, they can never get any result in their practising life. Such free mixers are sinners and offenders, they suffer birth after birth. If practitioners leave such association of illicit ‘free-mixers’ and join devotional programme, they can quickly attain success in their practising life.

Association can be of different kinds and in different ways. If you cast a glance at something having some bad thoughts, this is also association. If you look at someone with lust or desire, this is also association. You may not see or walk past something or someone, but if you think about somebody or something in your mind, that is also association. Men think about women in their minds, or women think about men in their minds—this is all illicit mixing. Just as association can take place in one’s mind, so can it happen through seeing or touching. Even if such free mixers practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they will not see any result. If you can give up all contact with all such non-devotees and

illicit free-mixers and accept Śrī Gurudev's mercy, service and disciplining, then you will get supreme benefit. Just as there can be diseases in any body, there can be various *anarthas* (evils) in practitioners. When you are sick, you go to a good doctor—if you take the prescribed medication and follow a diet, you will be free from the disease very soon. In the same way, when you practise devotion under the guidance of a bona fide guru, all thorns and problems go away. Śrī Gurudev is the best friend on the path to devotion. If you follow his instruction and guidance and reject all prohibited things, you are bound to attain supreme benefit. Those who live their life following instructions and rules of a bona fide guru, very soon attain success. There are no other well-wishers in this world like a saintly guru (*sādhu-guru*). Just as when a father sees that his son is going in a bad direction, he chastises his son and saves him from danger; in the same way, a bona fide guru also chastises his disciples and saves them from danger and downfall.

It is necessary to completely leave the association of people who are not devotees, who are free-mixers, who have strong attachment to their wife in married life, who are hen-pecked and have uncontrolled senses. Many householders also engage in illicit association with women. There are many sources of obstacles on the path of devotion and service to the Lord, and all these obstacles can quickly pull one into a wrong direction by even slightest association. Those who have started practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness, must by hook or by crook keep away from such bad association, otherwise they will try hard to practise but without any result. If you practise devotional processes very carefully and stay far away from the association of sinners, offenders, non-devotees, illicit free-mixers, you will definitely be successful.



Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī's Śiksāmṛta (Nectar of Instructions)

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

"A sober person who can tolerate (1) the urge to speak, (2) the mind's demands, (3) the actions of anger and the urges of the (4) tongue, (5) belly and (6) genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world."

(Śrī Upadeśāmṛta, 1)

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād said, "The urge to speak or to control one's speech is the biggest obstacle on the path of devotional practice." People say whatever comes to their mind; they say whatever they see; they gossip about whatever they have heard—this leads to destruction of devotion. Those who cannot control the urge of speech, the urge of anger, the urge of stomach and the urge of genitals, can never attain success, even if they practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Listening about the Lord, speaking about the Lord, glorifying the Lord, worshipping and paying obeisance to the Lord—these practices bring a certain result. If you follow all these devotional programmes, then firmness, taste, attachment, feelings and love arise, but if you cannot control the urge of speech, the urge of anger, the urge of lust, the urge of stomach, not only will you not get any result—whatever you earn will be all destroyed. If you keep water in

a pot that has holes, all water will fall down; in the same way, if you practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness but have holes, everything you do will fall through those holes. If you have not overcome the six enemies, you have no self-control, then the result of your spiritual practice will fall through these holes. *Prajalpa* (idle talks, gossiping) is the main thorn on the path of devotion. Everything except Hari-kathā is nonsense talk. If you cannot control your urge to speak and insult, criticise and gossip about others, you can never progress on the path of devotion. Those who discuss others' character, will get no spiritual benefit—they will not advance on the path of devotion.

kāhāre nā kare nindā, 'krṣṇa krṣṇa' bale
ajeya chaitanya sei jinibeka hele

"Those who do not offend anyone and always chant the Holy Name of Lord Kṛṣṇa conquer unconquerable Lord Chaitanya Mahāprabhu."

(Śrī Chaitanya-bhāgavata, 2.10.312)

If you criticise others, you will not be able to conquer Chaitanya. At the same time, it is easy to get Him. Śrī Chaitanya does not give mercy to those who offend others and the universe. You say whatever comes to your mind; you say whatever you have heard; you say whatever you have seen—but you chant the Holy Name. You can chant twenty-five thousand Holy Names, fifty thousand Holy Names, or a hundred thousand Holy Names, but if you criticise somebody with this same tongue, you will not get any result. Criticising others destroys devotion and invites a total ruination of one's devotional life. When you eat rice, your stomach becomes full, your health stays good. In the same way, criticising others may be pleasing to the tongue. You like to hear about others' holes or to see others' holes, but you will never get spiritual benefit because of this. You will only keep going in circles—whatever you get by practising hearing, chanting, etc.,

will be spoilt. Seeing others' faults destroys everything. Great souls never criticise others, rather they praise Vaiṣṇavs. Great souls never tell Vaiṣṇavs' faults, even if they hear or see some fault, they never speak about it. Those who themselves suffer from lust, are hen-pecked, mix freely with women and extremely uncontrolled, are themselves in a big trouble; they see others' faults and speak out loud about them. Those who cannot see their own innumerable faults, see many holes in others. Camels eat thorns—their tongues bleed, but they do not stop eating. In the same way, people come to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but cannot stop criticising others, insulting others—they will never get any spiritual benefit. Practitioners must proceed on the path of devotion very carefully. If you cannot heed this warning and roam around criticising others, then you are chopping off your own leg. Hole-searchers and fault-finders happily walk around criticising others left and right. Many say, "We see that he is stealing *prasādam*. I am telling the truth, what fault is there in saying it?" The fault is in telling this truth—the fault of speech. Who ate it will get the result, but because you go around telling about his fault to everybody, you will be harmed even more. If such fault-finders take shelter of a bona fide guru and keep good association, they will not get the result—they will just go in circles, ending up in the middle of nowhere. They become cheated, deceived in their life. You must not see others' faults, you must not hear about others' faults—and even if you see or hear about somebody's faults, you must not speak about it. Somebody steals food from the storehouse. Are you the controller? I saw him steal, I have told the truth, what is my fault? The fault is in telling this truth—this is what leads to ruination and the downfall of the practitioner. Whatever good thing you do, no matter how much you chant the Holy Name with this tongue, you will get no benefit. You will only move

forward down the path of inauspiciousness, trouble, and death. Those who do not heed this warning are very unfortunate.

If you take shelter of an ancestral guru or a false guru, then there is nobody who can save you from the hands of inauspiciousness. However, a bona fide guru gives a danger signal—he gives the right advice at the right time. If you listen to the advice or guidance of your guru, you will be benefitted. Those who do not listen to it, fall down. Suppose lust, anger arise in your mind and you become disturbed—no matter how much you practise devotional activities, you will be falling down. You can see how many good qualities one has, how much service one does, but if you criticise others, the result will be your falldown. If you speak about another person's hole, that fault will come to you and it will be a hundred times stronger. Be very careful. Never search for faults in others. Even if somebody does something bad, it is your fault that you see it or speak about it—it brings about ruination. If you do not actually rectify yourself having heard all this caution, you will suffer birth after birth. Many practitioners have good qualities but they cannot progress on the path of devotion. The impression of the actions of those who criticise and abuse others strikes Gurudev's heart heavily. Striking a great soul does not bring any benefit.



Association with women is to be absolutely rejected

“niṣkiñchanasya bhagavad-bhajanonmukhasya
 pāram param jīgamiṣor bhava-sāgarasya
 sandarśanam viṣayiṇām atha yoṣitāñ cha
 hā hanta hanta viṣa-bhakṣaṇato ‘py asādhu”

Greatly lamenting, the Lord then informed Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭāchārya, “Alas, for a person who is seriously desiring to cross the material ocean and engage in the transcendental loving service of the Lord without material motives, seeing a materialist engaged in sense gratification or seeing a woman who is similarly interested is more abominable than drinking poison willingly.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-chandrodaya-nāṭaka, 8.24)

For those who have become *niṣkiñchan* and want to serve the Supreme Lord exclusively, for those who want to cross the ocean of material existence, having close friendship, mixing, fraternising or intimacy with materialists is extremely wrong and ugly. If it is a man, mixing with ladies, or, if it is a lady, mixing with men—both is unholy. If one wants to practise spiritual life, if one wants to make the Lord happy, then association with materialists and association with men or women is more harmful than taking poison. Association with women and materialists does more harm than the harm from taking poison. Who is *niṣkiñchan*? The one who has renounced all happiness of the material world and engaged himself in the service of the Lord. Those who want

to engage in the service of the Lord, cutting off attachment to the association of women and children, are called *niṣkiñchan*. They consider everything in this world except for the service to the Lord to be insignificant. The main purpose of this life is to worship and serve the Lord. Even when you live in a family, you can be a *niṣkiñchan*. Even a *grīhastha* can be a *niṣkiñchan*. Even though you live in a house, internally you have no desire to live there, your one and only desire is to live in the house of the Lord or guru. Although they are not renounced externally, internally their material life has been actually erased. They become fixed and intent on the service of the Lord.

Those who want to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness must keep away from the association of women. This *śloka* serves as a warning for all practitioners. To scrutinise means to look at something with an intense greed, with a lustful mind, with the desire to enjoy or to think about the object of scrutiny. Association means when you meet a lady, you look at her lustfully, you exchange words or things with her, you feed her, she feeds you, you sit alone with her and talk secretly. When ladies mix with men, or men mix with ladies, this is more harmful than taking poison. Those who want to get a great benefit by serving the Lord, the guru and Vaiṣṇavs, must be always very careful about all this. You have fallen into the ocean of material life—if you do not want to drown in it, if you want to become free from all sorts of anxiety and problems, then you must keep away from materialists. Who are materialists? Those who consider earning wealth and taking care of one's health to be the most important thing. Materialists are those who think that if you pass an exam, this is the highest achievement, and if you fail it, your life is useless. Those who are busy amassing education, wealth, health, pride, enjoyment and consider this to be the essence of life, are materialists. Mixing with all such materialists, having

a close relationship with them, visiting their houses is more harmful for a practitioner than taking poison. Practitioners must proceed with caution. If you do not heed this matter, the joy and auspicious benefit of your practising life will be removed from you—you will be deprived of the affection of Śrī Guru and Vaiṣṇav. Aspiring practitioners must be very careful about all this. If you do not accept *guru-varga*'s mercy, do not follow their advice, you will fall down and suffer birth after birth—you will be chopping off your own leg and end up in all kinds of problems. Various bodily miseries, mental anxiety, bad fortune and hellish suffering are in store for you. Practitioners must be careful and keep away from materialists and women.



Cooking and dressing Deities are the main limbs of Deity service

Worshipping Deities, dressing Deities, washing the temple are services to the Deities. However, the main service in Deity worship is cooking. If you cook timely and nicely and feed Kṛṣṇa, He becomes happy. “*Trpta haye khāya kṛṣṇa yaśodā-bhavane.* Kṛṣṇa happily eats at the house of Mother Yaśoda.” If you cook anyhow just to get free from the chore—some preparation has too much salt, some preparation has too little salt, something got scorched, something has less spices, etc.—the Lord will not be satisfied eating such cooking. When you cook well, then every morsel will be relishable. Cooking service is an extremely important service. We must give importance to cooking. It is important to have a special regard towards the *bhoga-mandir* of Śrī Govindajī, in Śrī Jagannāth-mandir, Śrī Nāthdvār. It is necessary to clean and keep the kitchen neat, the offering should be arranged nicely. You can make the offering on a golden plate, but the Lord will not even try it—but when you cook nicely, you can offer it even on a leaf, the Lord will take it happily. Generally, we see that people take the footdust of those who worship the Deities, recite mantras, ring the bell, but those who have spiritual acumen know that the cooks are greater servitors. Cooking service is much greater than reciting praises. The value of cooking service is much more than the value of the *pūjārī*'s service. The golden crown of the Lordship glitters in all directions of the temple with its electric light, but nobody pays attention to the daily meals of the Lord.

This is not proper service. The Lord's main place is the *bhoga-mandir*. You must pour out your mind, your soul into cooking *bhoga* of the Lord—cooking should be done privately, secretly, nobody should see it. It is necessary to immerse yourself into such meditation, into such service.

In terms of service value, after cooking comes the service of dressing the Deities. When you put a garland on the Deities, people see it and shower you with praise, but nobody sees the cooking service. Those who help the cooks are also benefitted. You can do the shopping and buy good products, but you do not cook the preparations well—everything is then in vain. Therefore, it is necessary to do the cooking service very attentively and timely.



Related Vaiṣṇavs are worshippable for everyone

There is a feeling of a relationship between our body and mind. "My father," "My mother," "My relatives"—when there is such feeling ("my"), it means there is a relationship. However, if I have no feeling for something, it means I have no relation with it. Material people feel they are related to their wife, son, mother, father, relatives. Practising devotees also should have this sense of relation—but why should they be related to? There should be a relation with Śrī Hari Ṭhākur (worshippable Supreme Lord) and Vaiṣṇav Ṭhākur. "Śrī Gaurasundar and Śrī Śyāmasundar are my Lordships, my worshippable Deities, they are the objects of my service"—such feeling of closeness should be there in one's heart. Śrī Śrī Hari Ṭhākur and Śrī Guru Ṭhākur should sit within one's heart. "My Lord Kṛṣṇa," "My Gurudev"—when such feeling of closeness comes, then your service life will start. When you have got a relationship with Śrī Śrī Hari, Guru and Vaiṣṇavs, i.e. when some feeling or feeling of closeness comes to you, then it means your service life has started. If you have fortunately got such feeling of relatedness, it means you have already started your journey on the path of devotion. "I must see what makes Śrī Hari Ṭhākur, Śrī Guru Ṭhākur happy. My Lord is everyone's Lord—whether everyone thinks or does not think about His service and happiness, I must think about it. If nobody cooked for the Deities today, if there was no ārati today, if nobody sang *kīrtans*—what is it to me? My service is to wash the dishes or

to go for collection." Those who have the sense of relatedness, would not be able to remain indifferent because the Lord is mine. "The Lord has not eaten today"—it will make my heart pain. If you have relation with the Lord, you should keep an eye on all services, all devotional practises. When such relation comes, you will not have any compartmental mood when it comes to service. My job is only to pick flowers, to wash the dishes, and my job is only to chant *kīrtans*—if you have such mood, it means this relation has not fully come to you.

Where does such attachment come from (when you consider someone your very own)? Such affection comes from faith, devotion and love. One's practising life should start from the feeling that the Lord is my own family, my near and dear, and there is a relationship between us. You cannot get this feeling by reading *Bhāgavatam*. Servants of Gurudev, those who are dear to Gurudev, who love Gurudev, have the feeling of this relation. If you are related to Śrī Hari Ṭhākur, Śrī Guru Ṭhākur, and Vaiṣṇav Ṭhākur through faith, devotion or love, then your practising life has started. We must understand that if there is no affection, love and feeling "He is mine," then coming, offering some flower and going away, offering a mango and going away—this is not a relationship. If the feeling "He is mine" is not there, then there is no relationship and there is no practising life.

There is one more profound, wonderful and secret point. Śrī Hari Ṭhākur (the Supreme Lord) is the object of my worship and service, but you cannot bring this feeling that "Śrī Hari Ṭhākur is my near and dear" all of a sudden. The Lord does not come to me assuming a 'flesh and blood' form—it is not possible to get love and affection from Him directly, just as it is not possible to have a conversation with Him or exchange feelings. However, it is possible to get love and affection from Śrī Guru Ṭhākur directly. The relationship with Śrī Guru Ṭhākur is more real and tangible

that the relationship with Śrī Hari Thākur. He eats, speaks, sleeps, he chastises, he looks after my welfare. It is easy to create a relationship with Śrī Guru Thākur based on faith, devotion and love. It is easy for a mother to love her son because she can take him on her lap and feed him milk, she can talk to him, discuss things, and she can happily cook for him. Therefore, to love one's son is easy, but you cannot have such love for a photograph, for example. Gurudev assumes a form of flesh and blood, and it is easy to develop a relationship with him—it is easy to foster the feeling of kinship, affection, faith, devotion, or love. Those who take Gurudev as their very own, are also very dear to me.

Relationship with Gurudev is not created just by taking the mantra from him. If somebody loves Gurudev, for whatever reason, then they have this relationship with him. Whatever one's previously acquired nature is, whatever one's fortune is, for whatever reason it may be, if you have this close, affectionate relationship with Gurudev, then you have started your way along the path of devotion. This is the first step on the stairs of devotional path. If you take Gurudev as your very own, it means you have devotion and love.

"Gurudev is mine"—if such feeling has not appeared, then your practising life has not started yet. Mother is my mother, sister is my sister—I understand this very well; but that Śrī Hari Thākur is my Lord, that Śrī Guru Thākur is my Gurudev—I have not learned this yet. Yes, I say "*Jay Guru*" and offer many flowers to his photograph. There is nothing wrong in that, but it is necessary to develop a relationship. I love Gurudev, and he loves me—you cannot understand this relationship of the heart by reading scriptures or *kīrtan* books, it comes from within one's heart—then you can progress towards the domain of devotional service very quickly. My Gurudev has two thousand disciples—whether others come to visit him or not, *I must go to see my*

temple and my Lord. They did not cook properly for the Lord today, the Lord is fasting—this will give pain to my heart. If you have affectionate feelings towards the Lord and the guru, then your practising life will be successful—you may still have sins, offences, faults and shortcomings, but they will not be there for long. When you feel this relationship, then everything will float away in the flood of divine love. This feeling of close relation (“he is mine”) is so strong—it is so powerful and potent! I have him seated in my heart—when such feeling comes, then the guru’s job is successful.

Those who have got such a relationship are venerable. Those who feel such a relationship—even if it is a little girl or an old man—they are worshippable. Even if they do something wrong, they love Hari Ṭhākur and Guru Ṭhākur, and I offer them my obeisance. Somebody may not know how to sing well or how to cook well, somebody may not have any qualification, but because they love Hari Ṭhākur and Guru Ṭhākur, I offer ten million obeisances at their feet. It can be a very young girl, it can be an incompetent or an invalid person, it can be a person with no good qualities, but they are worshippable and venerable.



Transcendental knowledge and knowledge of the relationship

“divyam jñānam yato dadyāt kuryāt pāpasya saṁkṣayam
tasmāt dīkṣeti sā proktā deśikais tattva-kovidaiḥ
(Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilās, 2.9)

“Transcendental knowledge of the relationship uproots all ignorance. Therefore those who are expert in the study of the revealed scriptures, call this process initiation (*dīkṣā*).”

What is truth and what is untruth—those who realise it are called ‘seers of truth’ (*tattva-darśī*). Scientists of devotion say that those who have got transcendental knowledge are seers of the truth, or transcendental seers. Transcendental knowledge means the knowledge of the relationship, or proper all-encompassing knowledge. When one realises in their heart the eternal relationship between the Supreme Lord and the *jīva* soul, this is called transcendental knowledge. When one attains such transcendental knowledge, all darkness of the heart is removed from them and the light of truth inundates everything.

There are many types of knowledge. The knowledge one gets at school, college or university, is called material knowledge. Studying mathematics, English, medicine is not transcendental knowledge. Those who warn us through knowledge say, “Try to see your own fault. Do not see others’ faults; look at everyone’s good qualities. If you learn to see your own fault, then humility must definitely come to your heart.” ‘*Dīnera adhika dayā karena Bhagavān*. The Lord is more merciful to those who are poor.”

When you feel that you are low, this sense of lowness comes to your speech, behaviour and feeling. Śrī Hari, Guru, and Vaiṣṇavs shower their mercy upon such souls. Those who are boastful, sway from the domain of devotion and, as a result, cannot attract the mercy and blessings of Vaiṣṇavs. When you desire no honour for yourself and give honour to others, you get the mercy of Śrī Gaura. When Bhakti Devī truly manifests within you, you will feel humility within you. Arrogance is a trait of those who are in the state of ruination. Therefore, considering yourself great and searching for others' faults are great obstacles on the path of devotion. If you practise devotional activities being aware of these obstacles, you will no doubt get eternal benefit.



Satisfying the Lord is very life of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Kṛṣṇānuśilana Saṅgha

There is a regular assembly in our Saṅgha. Distinguished Vaiṣṇavs have assembled here today. We should be always conscious of our main purpose. Servitude to Lord Kṛṣṇa, striving to bring happiness to Lord Kṛṣṇa are the main purposes of our Mission. This search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only and main duty of *jīva* souls.

“jīvera svarūpa haya kṛṣṇera nitya-dāsa”

“By their nature, jīva souls are eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.20.108)

Great souls have established this *saṅgha* so that others can attain servitude to Kṛṣṇa and love for Kṛṣṇa—they have made this *saṅgha* so that every *jīva* soul, individually and collectively, could attain Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We must accept whatever is necessary for the loving service of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but we must also give up that which is unfavourable to devotion. That is why a great soul said, “Ānukūlyasya samkalpaḥ, prātikūlyā vivarjanam. Accept what is favourable, reject what is unfavourable.” (Vaiṣṇava-tantra)

Thinking how to bring benefit to the souls of this age, the *guru-varga* has established this *saṅgha* to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness timely and regularly. This is their great contribution: everyone should appreciate their way of bestowing mercy in the manner that is suitable for the current age. The centre of this Mission’s

heart is satisfaction of the Supreme Lord. If we do something without heart, only forcing our mind and body, we will be inevitably cheated—we will leave *guru-varga*'s mercy. It is necessary to temporarily hold many external functions to go along with the outside people so that the main purpose of this Mission does not become disturbed or covered. This is arranged to let the outside people enjoy. For example, we arrange for security of the door, gate, or wall so that everyone could sit inside and practise devotional life without intrusion. However, if we place too much emphasis on the wall and gate, this is not right. By our constitution we like to give priority to some things, it is true, but the managers must be intently alert to make sure that we never forget the inner mood or main spirit of the Saṅgha. We must never allow the core of our lives to be concealed; if the core of our Mission's heart becomes concealed, then the Mission becomes futile. Some cumbersome to our constitution situations often want to conceal the main purpose—at such times we must be very cautious; at such times, we must bring the main purpose (satisfaction of the Supreme Lord) to the forefront.

Śrīmatī Vinoda-vāṇī made a very beautiful expression in her homage. She called the external pomp 'sensational deeds.' Outside people value an outward show. In the name of devotion, many do things to impress others, but such sensational deeds or spectacular deeds are external demonstration. If we become busy with demonstration in the name of devotion to impress outside people, then this life is absolutely useless. In the domain of devotion, even if you publish many books, there is some intellectual show in it. The glare of spectacular deeds in the domain of knowledge (printing many books, magazines, etc.) strikes our eye. If we give big lectures, gather large assemblies, get many people to applaud—there is demonstrative value in it. All these things can help us in the domain of devotion as long as we remain acutely

aware of the main purpose, the root of such external activities. A little of such sensational deeds is not harmful, but if the glare of such things blinds our eyes and we forget the main purpose, then it is wrong and should be rejected. Many times, when devotees were going to make some arrangement, they would first write to Śrīla Prabhupād. He is *mahā-bhagavata-uttama* (the highest Vaiṣṇav)—for him, all these things are beautiful, and even if he was making all these demonstrative things, his vision never wavered. He utilised everything for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord. He has such a strong acumen, he is such a great expert in devotional service that through publishing many books, establishing many temples, gathering large committees, He brought happiness to his worshippable Lord. Because his quality was such, it was possible. However, if we imitate Śrīla Prabhupād and do what he did, there is a possibility that in the name of satisfying the Lord we will deviate from the main course. Actually, if somebody has the qualification for this, then if they do such things, they will increase the beauty of the domain of devotion.

Śrīla Prabhupād is the greatest priest in the satisfaction of the Lord. He does not pretend to be a guru—he appeared in this material world as a self-realised great soul. If you try to imitate him, declaring and shouting that because something was done by Śrīla Prabhupād, you can do it too, such an angle of vision is of a very low plane. People imitate him thinking this is the highest goal in life. If you try to imitate Śrīla Prabhupād on account of being his disciple, but inside you do not appreciate the spirit of his service style, then you can never be successful in your life. *Karma-kāṇḍa* (material life) and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* (life for knowledge) give more emphasis on spectacular deeds. If somebody places more emphasis only on rituals on account of being a disciple, but there is no heart beat in it, then as a result of such imitation, they will be removed far away from the domain

of devotion—such ‘disciples’ are drowning in an unfathomable ocean and do not make it to the domain of devotion. Imitating Śrīla Prabhupād, many are opening temples, making exhibitions, assemblies, committees, and publishing books. This is nothing else but lifeless transgression of one’s rights. It is more beneficial to follow the path of devotion according to your own rights without taking interest in the activities of the outside world.

sve sve ‘dhikāre yā niṣṭhā sa gunaḥ parikīrtitaḥ
viparyayas tu doṣaḥ syād ubhayor eṣa niśchayaḥ

“Steadiness in one’s own position is declared to be actual piety, whereas deviation from one’s position is considered impiety. In this way the two are definitely ascertained.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11.21.2)

If you live according to your right, or qualification, it is good for you. Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar will be pleased with that. Try to satisfy Him with whatever you have. You have money, knowledge, intelligence and health—give everything for His pleasure and service, you cannot but be benefitted. Whatever resources you have—you have money, people, etc.—serve with everything you have. Such great souls as Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād, Śrīla Rāya Rāmānanda, Śrīla Prabhupād, and others, showed their love for Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar through everything they had. We should follow their exalted ideal. If we try to imitate them without following their ideal, it will be a mistake. Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād stayed under a different tree each night when he was in Vṛndāvan—he would chew dry chickpea and compose scriptures out of love for Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar. If you try to imitate his extremely exalted example, you will invite a catastrophe into your life. This is sheer grimacing. In the same way, it is not necessary to imitate Śrīla Prabhupād. Try to follow him in your life. As much capacity you have, try to serve—it will make Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar happy. If you do what He does not want from you, it will be not right. If you have manpower,

you have money, or anything else, do not cheat with it, do not let it make you idle. "O Supreme All-Pervading Lord! Please give me the intelligence so that I may not be deceitful in Your service or may not transgress my rights." Deceit, fame, competition, other desires obstruct the path of devotion. It is necessary to be particularly careful not to get into the habit of looking at others, imitating others, not to let the outer glitter pull us away from the beauty of the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar.

Where does my strength lie? It is such a great fortune to get the association of a few sincere pure Vaiṣṇavs, such fortune has no comparison. Association of one sincere Vaiṣṇav is sufficient for one's life. They do not come to the Mission with any evil diabolic plan, nor do they want to get any position. They may not have so much qualification, but this does not matter. My only fear is that I can deviate from the service to your holy lotus feet. I do not want thousands of disciples or temples along the Ganges. I do not need millions of rupees. I do not want an assemblage of people driven by the material modes of ignorance. I do not want quantitative success, I want qualitative success. When there are many people, they start fighting with sticks. If you give a *daṇḍa* (a holy staff of a mendicant monk, *sannyāsi*) to many people, they will end up fighting with these *daṇḍas*. If a *sannyāsi*'s *daṇḍa* turns into a stick, then you are in for a great disaster approaching the domain of devotion. We must watch out that our *daṇḍa* does not turn into a stick and make sure our devotional strength increases. If we become renunciates, we must watch out that we do not spend our life in laziness. If you get even fifteen sincere pure Vaiṣṇavs, then devotion will not be overcast. So many scriptures are being published, so many temples are being opened that often devotion becomes overcast. When service necessity comes, we should not sleep—and if I do fall asleep, my friends will guide me.

Chaste adherence to the guru and the mercy of Gauḍīya Guru-varga

Śrī Gurupādpadma is an embodiment of the Lord's mercy. “Śrī-guru-charaṇa-padma kevali bhakati sadma. Śrī Guru's lotus feet are an abode of exclusive devotion.” The *jīva* souls who have mundane vision cannot see, or have the *darśan* of, the guru, that is why they are situated far from real spiritual benefit. Gurudev is an embodiment of the service of the Lord—this vision is the highest vision. Gurudev can be seen with the help of oral reception (*śruti*). It is not possible to have a proper *darśan* of the lotus feet of Śrī Guru with one's material eyes. Gurudev's property is realised via oral *darśan* (*śruti-darśan*).

Gurudev is a knower of the *Vedas*. When a *jīva* soul obtains transcendental vision, Gurudev's association, mercy, and proximity, it can then get rid of the material or fleshy eyes (vision). According to the level of one's vision, there are three classes of Gurus. By the mercy of *jñāni-gurus'* association, one can come to Brahma (impersonal aspect of the Supreme Lord) or realise Brahma. *Yogī-gurus'* association and mercy, proximity, one can come to Paramātmā (all pervading aspect of the Lord), but through transcendental vision, through *bhakta-gurus'* association and mercy you can attain loving service to the Lord.

The Supreme Lord is an object of devotion and love. Devotion is eternally present within the Lord and His devotees. Gurupādpadma is the dearmost devotee of the Lord (“Guru Kṛṣṇa preṣṭha janere”), and it is by his mercy that it can be possible to attain both the Lord and devotion to the Lord, as well as His love. It is possible to attain the Lord and service to the Lord through Śrī

Gurudev who is firmly established in the religion of love—you should surrender to him, make honest enquiry, and serve to him.

The Lord, who is full in six opulences, eternally plays in the lotus heart of Gurudev. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the very wealth of his heart. He can give Kṛṣṇa to those who surrender to him. Without his mercy and association, *jīva* souls have no other way to escape from the ocean of material existence. When one takes shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Gurupādpadma, their previously accumulated bad elements gradually become destroyed. As a result of surrendering at his lotus feet, one gets the knowledge of the relationship with the Lord; all sense of duty and attachment or affection towards one's material relatives and family becomes expelled; one gradually develops faith, taste, and then attachment to the wealth of narrations about the Lord and His service. The Lord never gives His mercy to anyone directly. Kṛṣṇa's mercy is liberally given to the surrendered souls via Gurudev. Gurudev does not only give the mantra (the Holy Name) to his disciples, along with the mantra he gives divine knowledge of the soul's relationship with the Lord and teaches and advises the soul how to practise properly—he clears the path towards one's genuine supreme benefit. The Holy Name of the Lord, the mantra, etc. naturally awaken in the hearts of those who have received the mercy, association, teachings, etc. of Gurudev.

Those who practise spiritual life avoiding devotion, i.e. *jñānīs* and *yogīs* (seekers or knowledge and mystic perfections), also submit their faith unto a corresponding guru, but when they get perfection or liberation as a result of their practice, they leave the service to their guru or the worship of the guru. However, practising devotees always serve their guru at the stage of practising life, and they continue to serve their guru eternally when they attain perfection of devotion, i.e. divine love.

Devotees who have no faith in the scriptures, who have tender faith, keep trying to serve the Lord. They do not think that

it is necessary to give particular importance to the service of the guru, but such method of serving the Lord is not approved, i.e. it does not lead to the happiness of the Lord. That is why the Lord does not accept their affection. However, those who are expert in the service of the Lord, as a result of their service to the lotus feet of Śrī Gurupādpadma, realise the conception of service in their hearts. Gurupādpadma does not hijack exclusive devotees' service—he kindly bestows eternal benefit. When Gaudīya Vaiṣṇav Āchārya Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād was talking about the sixty-four devotional practices, first of all he instructed to take shelter of the guru's feet, accept his spiritual teachings and take initiation, etc. Therefore, service to the guru and chaste adherence to the guru is first and foremost necessity for every practising. What is Gurudev's intention, what is his innermost desire, what makes him happy? This is all that occupies a disciple's mind and lies at the root of a disciple's activities. Similarly, Gurudev is also a disciple's eternal friend, associate and bestower of eternal benefit on the spiritual path. This relationship between the guru and the disciples exists eternally.

Gaudīya *guru-varga* teach how to worship the lotus feet of Śrī Rasikaśekhar Kṛṣṇa, the foremost enjoyer of the mellow of love, in the ecstasy of service. If you pray to Gurudev only in the form of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvar, it means you are worshipping *jñāna-bhakti*, *yoga-bhakti*, and *Vedic bhakti* as a means of attaining the vision of Brahma, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān. Vrajendranandan Kṛṣṇa, the foremost enjoyer of the mellow of love, is the original source of Brahma, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān and an embodiment of *madhura-rasa* (consorthood, highest loving devotion). He becomes submissive to those who possess the highest loving devotion to Him (*madhura-rasa-bhakti*). The abode of such sweetest loving devotion is Goloka. There, Śrī Rasikaśekhar Kṛṣṇa is the object of sweet loving devotion

of His highest associates—He tastes the loving devotion of the associates who have taken shelter in *madhura-rasa*, and lets those who have taken shelter in Him, taste the nectar of His loving service. You can taste the nectar of loving service to this Rasikaśekhar Kṛṣṇa—the only other second form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (the source of Brahmā-Viṣṇu and Maheśvar) is Śrī Baladev and Śrī Rādhārāṇī, an extension of Hlādinī and the embodiment of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *svarūpa-śakti*. Therefore, surrendered souls know the Gauḍīya *guru-varga* to be a non-different embodiment of Baladev or Nityānanda and Śrī Rādhā’s eternal maidservants, and they always pray to them.

In the ‘*Nava-yogendra samivād*’ (discussion with nine great sages) found in the crest jewel of the revealed scriptures, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, King Videha (Nimi) asks one of the nine ṛṣis, Śrī Prabuddha, questions about spiritual truth, i.e. his own spiritual benefit; in reply, the ṛṣi speaks about the sole duty of the *jīva* soul, which is hearing from Śrī Gurupādpadma and taking shelter at his holy feet, as well as about the symptoms of a guru, in the following way (SB, 11.3.21-22):

tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam
śābde pare cha niṣṭātāṁ brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam
tatra bhāgavatān dharmān śikṣed gurv-ātma-daivataḥ
amāyayānuvṛttiā yais tuṣyed ātmātma-do hariḥ

“If souls desire to attain spiritual benefit, they must take shelter at the lotus feet of a perfect bona fide Śrī Gurupādpadma and hear from him. He is expert at determining the significance of the Vedic scriptures and has direct perception of it; he has attained the vision of the Supreme Lord, i.e. with his eyes of love, he has the *darśan* of the Lord; and he is capable of granting others the vision of the Lord through his mercy and divine knowledge—because such a knower of the supreme path shown in the *śruti* scriptures can cut off the soul’s doubts, hesitation and

arguments. We must accept the teaching of the religion based on satisfaction of the Lord seeing Gurudev as our eternal best friend on this spiritual path and an embodiment of the Lord as well as all demigods. There is no other way for the *jīva* souls to fulfil their eternal necessity and attain the highest goal of life (divine love for the Lord) except for surrender to Śrī Gurudev, the bestower of the teachings of this *bhāgavad-dharma*. When *jīva* souls surrender to Śrī Gurupādpadma, all their other low desires except for the service to the Lord are forever destroyed at the root. Clean of deceit, leaving all desires for enjoyment, liberation, even perfections, the soul always engages in the service of the guru and all ignorance, dirt, and darkness is removed from their hearts; after that, the souls become fixed in the realisation of master-servant (Kṛṣṇa-Kāṣṭha) within their cleansed hearts and it then becomes possible for them to follow the highest religion aimed at satisfying the Lord."

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the embodiment of *Bhāgavatam* and the Lord Himself, appears in Kali-yuga as the guru. He initiates and teaches the *jīva* souls who are devoured by Kali, covered with ignorance, and averse to the Lord, the religion of *Bhāgavatam* through *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*. He Himself performs the duties of a bona fide guru—He grants *jīva* souls shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Gurupādpadma; rescues all *jīva* souls—without consideration whether they ask for it or not, whether they are qualified or not, He rescues even meat-eaters; He bestows the hidden treasure of divine love through *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*. Even if His ideal, teachings and instructions do not remain anywhere in the scriptures, we can still realise something through His *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. To turn the averse souls towards the Supreme Lord, the main leader of Gauḍīya Mission, Śrīla Sach-chid-ānanda Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur himself, composed a small book called *Daśamūla-śikṣā* elaborating on the Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's

advice on *sambandha* (the relationship), *abhidheya* (the goal), *prayojana* (the means).

At that time, Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur exposed all the misconceptions in the Gauḍīya lineage. To establish true faith in the highest preaching of pure religion of love that was preached by Mahāprabhu, he wrote in his *Daśamūla-śikṣā* about the *sambandha* (the relationship), *abhidheya* (the goal), *prayojana* (the means): ‘the instruction of the Vedas is obtained through a guru-paramparā’ is the first point; there are nine more points based on the direct evidence from the *Vedas* and other subordinate scriptures (*Bhāgavatam*, etc.):

“(1) The Supreme Lord is the highest truth. (2) He is full of all potencies. (3) He is the emporium of all *rasas*. (4) *Jīva* souls are His separate expansions. (5) Conditioned souls are in the clutches of Māyā. (7) The entire conscious universe is simultaneously one with and different from the Lord. (8) Devotion is the only practice. (9) Love is the only necessity.” He performed the work of an āchārya and discussed the nature of the soul and the transcendental world in many of his books expounding on the *sambandha* (the relationship), *abhidheya* (the goal), and *prayojana* (the means) based on the teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. It is written in his holy books: just as *dashmularishta* (an ayurvedic medicine made up from ten kinds of roots) and *dasamula-pancan* (ayurvedic digestive) are used to cure bodily diseases of *jīva* souls, in the same way the scripture *Daśamūla-śikṣā* is the only method that can relieve the souls’ suffering from the heart disease of material existence; in the same way, if there is no initiation into and education about *Daśamūla-śikṣā* in Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, the *sampradāya* will become contaminated, despite the *pañcham-saṁskāra* (common purificatory rites).

Having been taught Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur’s exalted teachings and ideal, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswati Goswāmī Prabhupād has made a great arrangement for the preaching of

pure devotion—he established temples and centres in many countries and places all over the world and sent Vaiṣṇav *sannyāsīs* to preach. He was an embodiment of *bhāgavat-vāñī* (message of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*). In his instructions he told, “We have not come to become carpenters and builders. We are merely messengers of divine message.”

“You will be abused and humiliated a hundred times, but you must never leave Hari-*kīrtan*. As soon as we leave Hari-*kīrtan*, the surrounding environment will come to attack us.” His ultimate advice for the surrendered souls was chaste adherence to the guru: “Stay all together in strict adherence to the main shelter-giver (*Śrī Gurupādpadma*), your only duty is to continue practising and preaching Śrī Rūpa-Raghunāth’s message.”

Among the nine types of devotional practices, Gaudiya *guru-varga* has given special importance to dancing and chanting the Holy Name and to worshipping Deities. Practising these two processes allows one to serve and worship *vāchak* (*Śrī Nām Prabhu*, that which denotes the Lord) and the *vāchya-avatāra* (He who bears the Name, the Lord Himself). If devotees practise devotional processes revealed by the Gaudiya *guru-varga* with sincerity, with the intent to make the Lord happy and strictly following Śrī Guru, then Śrī Gurupādpadma will shower his special mercy and blessing upon such dear, kindred and loving devotees.



Glory and nature of Śrī Śrī Guru

yasya prasādad bhagavat-prasādo
yasyāprasādāt na gatiḥ kuto 'pi
dhyāyam stuvaṁś taśya yaśas tri-sandhyam
vande guroḥ śrī-charaṇāravindam

"I offer my obeisance unto the lotus feet of Sri Guru, praising and meditating upon his glory at the three junctions of the day. By his grace, one gains the Lord's grace. Without his grace, one has no shelter anywhere."

(*Sri Sri Gurvastakam*, 8)

We are grateful to have got this great fortune to hear devotees submit auspicious invocation in glorification of Śrī Gurudev on the occasion of Śrī Guru Pūja arranged with so much enthusiasm by the devotees in Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Math and Mission, established by Śrī Gurupādpadma in Śrī Vṛndāvan Dhām.

If we want to know Gurudev, we must get his mercy. It is impossible to understand the nature of the guru by his outer worldly disguise. If a person has any connection with the material world left (if parents dote on their children, if a husband has mundane love for his wife, relatives, friends)—such love is temporary, destructive and subsequently brings about misery and suffering. People get fleeting and occasional joy or dream-like happiness from external pleasures through their minds and bodies consisting of five elements (earth, water, fire, air, ether). The body and mind are material faculties. Because there is a conscious soul within them, this body, senses and mind are believed to be as if conscious. The soul has an eternal relationship with the omnipotent and filled with eternity,

knowledge, and bliss, Supreme Personality of Godhead. The true identity of the *jīva* soul is that it is an eternal servant, energy and particle of this omnipotent conscious form of Paramātmā (Supersoul) or Bhagavān (Supreme Personality of Godhead). Śrī Gurupādpadma, a dear associate of the Lord, overcome with causeless mercy, bestows upon fortunate souls the knowledge of this relationship with the Lord. The *jīva* soul forgets its own identity and, identifying itself with the created by Māyā body, house, the relatives—it is forced to suffer three-fold miseries—*ādhyātmik*, *ādhibhautik*, and *ādhidaivik*, etc. (miseries cause by other souls, by one's body, and by the nature). Although the soul who has forgotten the Lord treats relatives, family and compatriots with love, it never gets eternal joy. The *jīva* souls who have forgotten their relationship with the Lord, keep on coming and going in the cycle of birth and death.

Śrī Gurupādpadma, an embodiment of the Lord's mercy, being compassionate to such *jīva* souls who have forgotten Kṛṣṇa, gives them knowledge about their true identity, i.e. about their relationship with the Lord. When fortunate *jīva* souls get Gurudev's association, proximity, and guidance, they become detached from their illusory situation. Then, the soul leaves its body-consciousness, mind-consciousness, etc. and comes to live on the plane of soul. "The Lord is the master—the *jīva* souls are His slaves, or servants, and it is the duty of the souls to serve the Lord"—Gurudev awakens this feeling within the hearts of the *jīva* souls who have forgotten their true identity. When the soul becomes enlightened and realises its own true identity, then all sense of worldly duty towards one's parents, children, family and relatives, eases off. Carrying out your material duty towards your relatives is called *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Practising *varṇāśrama-dharma* does not bring satisfaction to the Supreme Lord. Gurudev gives guidance to surrendered souls on how to practise true religion to attain eternal peace and happiness of the

soul. Another name of practising this true religion is Hari-toṣaṇa (satisfaction of the Lord, making the Lord happy). Satisfaction of the Lord is the only vow of Gurudev. He himself at every moment strives to make the Lord happy and engages others in making the Lord happy—he is always engaged in the service of the Lord. This symptom is observed among the *goṣṭhānandī* gurus. *Viviktānandī* gurus serve the Lord alone, they do not teach others how to serve the Lord, neither do they give any guidance to others. Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur, Śrīla Prabhupād, Śrīla Guru Mahāraja, and other Gauḍīya *guru-varga* act as *goṣṭhānandī* gurus and they arduously strive to bring eternal and real benefit to the *jīva* souls who have taken shelter in them. Although they are the *uttama-bhāgavata* (topmost Vaiṣṇavs), they come down to the level of *madhyam-adhikār* (middle class)—serving the Lord with love and being friends with all the devotees, they bestow mercy upon ignorant *jīva* souls and tolerate all hostility.

When the souls who have taken shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Guru worship their Gurudev, the manifest guru immediately sends this worship to the Lord through the *guru-varga*. He never hijacks or uses anything that is given to him by the disciple during the worship for his own enjoyment. Worship of the manifest *āchārya* makes the Lord happy—his proper worship is automatically accomplished through that.

“*jagate prakaṭa bhāi tāhā vinā gati nāi
yadi chāo āpana kuśala*”

*“If you want your own happiness, except for this method there
is no other way revealed in this world, brother.”*

To bestow eternal benefit upon *jīva* souls, Krṣṇa reveals Himself in the form of a guru. Therefore, except for the worship of the current *āchārya*, there is no other way to get supreme benefit.

Although the guru and the Lord are one and the same and also different from each others, Gurudev is an embodiment of

the Lord's servant. He is the knower of the *Vedas* and possesses transcendental vision. His proximity and mercy destroys some *jīva* souls' material or fleshy vision. Those who have fleshy mind cannot realise the proper identity of Śrī Gurupādpadma; they see him as a mere human and make an offence at his holy feet. This offence leads to degradation. Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu bestowed divine love for Lord Kṛṣṇa even unto the fallen, sinful, suffering, poor, low, degraded souls and meat-eaters. In the same way, being non-different from Śrī Nityānanda, Śrī Gurupādpadma propels everyone on the path of eternal genuine supreme benefit by bestowing his causeless mercy to everyone around not considering whether one is qualified or not, whether one wanted it or not; and by giving everyone a chance to partake of the service rendered out of divine love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He teaches others about the Lord, removes all kinds of unwanted elements, other desires and deceit from the hearts of the *jīva* souls and inspires everyone to serve to Kṛṣṇa and Kāṣṭha (Kṛṣṇa and His devotees).

In *Gitā* (4.34), Śrī Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to receive transcendental knowledge through service to the guru:

tad viddhi pranipātena, paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānam, jñāninās tattva-darśināḥ

“You will be able to attain knowledge by satisfying the divine master with submission, relevant inquiry, and sincere service. The enlightened souls who are learned in scriptural knowledge and endowed with direct realisation of the Supreme Absolute Truth will impart divine knowledge to you.”

When you approach Gurudev who possesses transcendental vision, prostrate yourself at his feet, i.e. pay him obeisance and, with the desire to serve him, ask him questions about the nature of the soul and the Lord, Śrī Gurupādpadma, an embodiment of mercy, gives the souls who are eager to hear, who have devotion and who are inquisitive, true knowledge about the relationship

with the Lord and removes all kinds of doubts and hesitation that hinder service to the Lord. It is impossible to get this knowledge about the relationship with the Lord through argument, logic, erudition or material qualification; knowledge about the nature of the soul and the Lord naturally and quickly appears in the hearts of the *jīva* souls who have taken shelter of a bona fide guru—through the service to the guru. Except for service to Śrī Gurupādpadma, all attempts to gain this transcendental knowledge will be to no avail.

When Śrīla Prahlād Mahārāj taught demons' children about the service to the Lord, among various devotional processes and practices, he gave special importance to the practice of service to the guru:

guru-śuśrūṣayā bhaktyā sarva-labdhārpaṇena cha
saṅgena sādhu-bhaktānām īśvarārādhanena cha

“One must accept the bona fide spiritual master and render service unto him with great devotion and faith. Whatever one has in one's possession should be offered to the spiritual master, and in the association of saintly persons and devotees one should worship the Lord.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 7.7.30)

Through service to the guru, all kinds of low material desires of the *jīva* soul are destroyed; the souls get relief from aspiration for enjoyment, liberation, supernatural powers, etc., from all unwanted elements stemming from other desires—and, gradually, the spiritual soul attains and increases service to the Lord, developing taste for worshipping the Lord, and attachment to the Lord's worship. For the practitioners of pure devotion who want to please the Lord, service to the guru is the highest and only duty.

It is not true that Śrī Gurupādpadma only gives shelter to his close followers—along with shelter, He gives them the

Holy Name, the main teachings and transcendental guidance—he helps his disciples to progress quickly towards the service domain. So-called gurus give only the Name, mantra, etc., but what is this Name? What is this mantra? Who is the *jīva* soul? Who is the Lord? They do not try to give all this knowledge. As a result, disciples of such gurus do not become released from material bondage, ignorance, unwanted elements, etc. Unless you realise the nature of the Name and the mantra, unless you get relief, mercy and association of great Śrī Gurupādpadma, the Holy Name and the mantra will not properly manifest within you. Along with the Holy Name and the mantra, great Gurupādpadma imparts aural transcendental knowledge onto his disciples. If you want to come to the Lord, you must receive this aurally transmitted transcendental knowledge from your Śrī Gurupādpadma. It is impossible to get the *darśan* or service of the Lord except through this aural *darśan*. “How can you see the Lord?” One can get a proper *darśan* of the Lord through the divine eyes that come through the transcendental knowledge that is received from the holy mouth of Śrī Guru.

Selfish workers, knowledge-seekers, practitioners of yoga worship their guru. The result of practising *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga*, etc. is enjoyment, liberation, mystic powers, etc.—such practitioners always reject their gurus. Pure devotees, on the other hand, always worship their guru. Even when they attain perfection of devotion (divine love), they still continue to always strictly follow their guru—they never stay separately from their Śrī Gurupādpadma. Pure devotees always, in every situation follow their affectionate great guru. Śrīla Jīvapād said about the attainment of perfection of devotion (divine love), “Guru, scriptures, faith, taste, and strict adherence are the perfection.”

The true meaning of the aurally transmitted scriptures is received from Gurudev. Gurudev is an embodiment of scriptures.

Just as he has a complete direct perception or realisation of the Supreme Lord, in the same way he is also the greatest knower of the *śabda-brahma* (transcendental sound vibration). The entire conception found in the scriptures (*Vedas*, *Bhāgavatam*, etc.) continuously appears on his tongue. As a result of Śrī Gurudev's association and mercy, practitioners of devotion get faith in the scriptures. From such position, taste, attachment, etc. gradually come and the practitioner progresses quickly towards the plane of devotion. Through continuous service to the Lord in strict adherence to one's guru, one attains the perfection of devotion (divine love for the Lord).

By his nature, the guru is a complete embodiment of the divine energy coming from Hlādinī (internal potency of the Lord). At every moment, with all his senses, he engages in satisfying Lord Kṛṣṇa. He has no other task except for giving pleasure to Lord Kṛṣṇa. He is always anxious to please Śrī Rādhā Govinda in any possible way. Śrī Gurupādpadma gives one a proper realisation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of all divine mellows. He gives sincere disciples admission to loving service and worship of Śrī Rādhā Govinda, who are an embodiment of sweetness. Without his merciful glance, it is not possible to get sweet loving service to Vrajeśa-tanaya Śrī Kṛṣṇa (son of the king of Vraja). Śrī Gurudev is the main teacher of divine love. Worship of Gurudev is not a worship of some ordinary man. Gurudev is an embodiment of the Lord's mercy. The Lord Himself never gives His mercy to anyone. The Lord's mercy is showered upon affectionate and dearmost disciples by the Lord's dear associate—Śrī Gurupādpadma. The foremost prescription of the scriptures is the worship of the guru (*guru-pūjā*). The guru is not worshipped only on a certain date. The duty of those who take shelter of the guru, is to worship Gurudev in every place and at every moment.

Merciful Śrī Gaura Hari

Magnanimous Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar is an incarnation of mercy. Śrī Gaura Hari appeared in Nadiya almost five hundred and thirty-five years ago to give the *jīva* souls, wasted by the age of Kali, the divine love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa—the mysterious love of Goloka, that had never before been given in this world by any incarnation of the Lord, the love that even the *Vedas* are searching for. He taught the *jīva* souls the gist of the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣadas*, as well as the pure conception of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead? Who is the *jīva* soul? What is this world and what is the relationship between the Lord and the *jīva* soul? He established the *jīva* souls who have forgotten the Lord, in this knowledge of the relationship and bestowed upon all *jīva* souls greatest gifts: He showed in His own life that the highest method of attaining the goal, or the highest practising life, is pure devotion, and that the attainment reached as the result of practising devotion is divine love for the Lord.

The Lord's forms are unlimited. The form that Śrī Gaura Hari spoke about is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāj. The Lord has unlimited pastimes, He embodies all divine mellows of devotion (*rasa*). Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar showed the beauty and excellence of worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is full of sweet pastimes, He is the acme of all types of divine relationships (*rasa*) and divine love (*prema*). Śrī Gaurasundar Himself appeared in six forms to teach the souls about this divine love—Śrī Nityānanda (His non-different form), Śrī Advaita Āchārya (incarnation of a devotee), Śrī Gadādhar (the Lord's internal potency), Śrīvās

Paṇḍit (*bhakta-tattva*), and Śrī Guru. Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs many sweet pastimes, He is the source of all incarnations, and He is the only object of worship—this is the opinion of Śrī Gaura Hari.

If we consider the position of Śrī Kṛṣṇachandra among all the incarnations, He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. The qualities of all incarnations manifest from Him. It is impossible to reach such embodiment of sweet divine love that is found within Śrī Kṛṣṇa through any practice, but Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu gave His *darśan* to all *jīva* souls and noted to Śrīla Sanātan Goswāmī:

veda-śāstre kahe sambandha, abhidheya, prayojana
krṣṇa, krṣṇa-bhakti, prema—tina mahā-dhana

"In the Vedic scriptures, Kṛṣṇa is the central point of attraction, and His service is our activity. To attain the platform of love of Kṛṣṇa is our life's ultimate goal. Therefore Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa's service and love of Kṛṣṇa are the three great riches of life.

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.20.143)

Although Vedas extol *dharma*, etc. and advise methods how to attain religion, prosperity, material desires, liberation, etc., the highest main teaching is the realisation of the transcendental *sambandha* (the relationship), *abhidheya* (the means), and *prayojana* (the goal). Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the object of divine love, is the only related personality for the *jīva* soul. This whole conscious and unconscious world is simultaneously one and different manifestation of the Lord, a transformation of His potency. There are many forms in the transcendental world, and each of the forms has many pastimes. The acme of such manifestations is sweet Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of the king of Vraja. The Lord is not only a creator or a giver of liberation—this is not such a great gift. He gives devotees the gift of His own divine love—devotees make Him powerless. When He sees that devotees serve Him with love, He becomes subjugated by them and bestows the gift of divine

love onto them. Such is His greatest contribution. Although He is the object of love, He is also an embodiment of shelter of divine love—He gives joy to His devotees and through that becomes happy Himself. He is always happily engaged in loving dealing with His devotees. Although He treats various kinds of devotees with love, the highest loving pastimes that He performs with His sweet associates in Vraja, are the most astonishing of all His loving pastimes; and among all the residents of Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa becomes controlled by Śrī Rādhārāṇī more than by anyone else. Such pure unblemished love is the highest attainment for a *jīva* soul, and Śrī Gaurasundar taught it to the *jīva* souls of this material world by His own example.

Those who get this kind of divine love, have no need for any religiosity, knowledge, renunciation, etc. Through religious, educational, renounced, and other practices a *jīva* soul may attain religiosity, material prosperity, sense-gratification, and liberation, but these are not the real eternal necessities of the soul. If a *jīva* soul wants to attain the highest and ultimate divine love for Kṛṣṇa, it must practise pure devotion. The object of love is the Lord, and the shelter of divine love is a devotee. Divine love eternally resides within devotees and the Lord. Sweet Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared in this Kali-yuga in Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām in the form of Śrī Gaura Hari to teach pure devotion to the *jīva* souls and to teach how to practise such pure divine love. Thus, Gaura Dhām is an incarnation of Śrī Vraja Dhām. Just as sweetness, nectar is scattered around Śrī Vraja Dhām, in the same way, Śrī Gaura Dhām (the *prema-kṣetra*) is full of magnanimity. Śrī Gaura Hari appears as an embodiment of condensed form of mercy of playful Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa appears as magnanimous Śrī Gaura Hari. The *jīva* souls who take shelter of Śrī Gaura Hari (a form of sweet Kṛṣṇa), can practise loving devotion very easily. If practitioners want to practise loving devotion but

they have desires for material happiness, or even the happiness of liberation, they will not get any result. The object of divine love is the Lord, and this divine love is attained by the mercy and association of shelter-giving devotees. An embodiment of magnanimity, Śrī Gaurasundar, appears in this material world together with His magnanimous associates, and advises the *jīva* souls to learn the meaning of the association of devotees.

When conditioned souls associate with the material world created by Māyā, they experience material happiness and unhappiness. The souls averse to the Lord are engrossed in material things and fall in love with material entities. You cannot get unalloyed happiness or uninterrupted peace by indulging in such love. When a father gets the association of his son, or a husband gets the association of his wife, or a mother gets the association of her daughter, this gives only temporary and transient happiness. However, the Lord is the master, and *jīva* souls are His servants; there is no possibility for them to attain eternal peace or happiness for as long as they are situated in the material world. Those who desire liberation leave illusory material association and try so hard to get free from the material world and get some happiness of the soul, but even liberation is not an eternal or highest necessity for the soul. Śrī Gaura Hari, an incarnation of divine love, has shown the inferiority and insignificance of the happiness of enjoyment, the happiness of liberation, and the happiness of mystic powers, and established the super-excellence of the attainment of divine love for the Lord. Love for the Lord is the only highest and ultimate necessity of a *jīva* soul. The embodiment of mercy, Śrī Gaurasundar has discovered the easiest method for the souls who are greedy for material enjoyment and covered by bad elements, to attain this love—this method is chanting of the Holy Name in the association of loving devotees (*premik-bhaktas*). If *jīva* souls can

chant the Holy Name, that was revealed by Gaura, without offences and in the association of devotees of Gaura, then they will attain the best result—they will get divine love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Chanting the Holy Name of the Lord, hearing the Holy Name of the Lord and remembering the Holy Name of the Lord, and worshipping the Holy Name of the Lord in the association of pure devotees, completely (with the root) destroys all kinds of unwanted elements, ignorance and secondary pursuits and interests, etc.

**kṛṣṇa-bhakti-janma-mūla haya ‘sādhu-saṅga’
kṛṣṇa-prema janme, tiḥo punaḥ mukhya aṅga**

“Sādhu-saṅga, good association, is what the devotion to Kṛṣṇa is ultimately born from; even when the highest love for Kṛṣṇa is born, good association remains a principle part of the devotee’s life.”
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.22.80)

When *jīva* souls get the association and proximity of the devotees of the Lord, especially the association and mercy of Śrī Gurupādpadma, all kinds of bad desires and other expectations are removed from them—worshipping the Lord’s Name, qualities, glories, and pastimes (through hearing, chanting, and service) progressively increases one’s taste for it. Śrī Gaura Hari bestows honest (without deceit) mercy upon the *jīva* souls suffering from three types of miseries, who have forgotten Lord Kṛṣṇa, and inspires them to embark on the spiritual path by teaching them the importance of devotees’ association—He similarly spoke about the highest mercy of Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām, the very place of His divine appearance.

‘Śrī Gauda-maṇḍala bhūmi yebā jāne chintāmaṇī—devotees consider Śrī Gauda Maṇḍal to be a transcendental conscious touchstone.’ Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām is a magnanimous abode of divine love of the sweetest play. Every atom and molecule of this holy abode assists *jīva* souls in coming in touch with Śrī Gaura

Hari, an embodiment of condensed mercy. The very dust of this holy place is endowed with consciousness—it is not only conscious, but it is superconscious, i.e. it is actually transcendental touchstones. If *jīva* souls roll in the super conscious dust of this holy abode, all their sins, suffering, unhappiness, pain, anxiety become subsequently relieved, and they progress on the path towards eternal benefit, or real peace. The sweetness of the mercy of Śrī Gaura Hari, the magnanimous crest jewel, arises through the aural paths in the hearts of loving devotees when they circumambulate the nine islands of Nabadwīp Maṇḍal. Just as Vraja Maṇḍal is an abode of sweet pastimes, in the same way, Gaura Dhām is the abode where Gaura Hari, mercy incarnate, performs His magnanimous pastimes. This abode's water, wind, particles of dust, trees, everything is tainted with the divine love of Śrī Gaura. “*Vṛndāvana-ābhede Nabadwīpa dhāme vādhira kuṭīra khāni.* I will build my small cottage in Nabadwīp Dhām seeing this land as being non-different from Vṛndāvan Dhām.” The holy abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Vṛndāvan Dhām, is the shelter of liberated souls, but Gaura Dhām grants shelter to everyone—the sinful, suffering, low, poor, fallen and wicked. “*Ye yata patita haya, taba dayā-latā tāya.* The more fallen one is, the taller their creeper of mercy is.”

Gaura is the only friend of the fallen souls. The holy abode of Gaura manifests to bestow pure mercy upon the lowest *jīva* souls who are devoured by Kali and embody a playground for lust and anger. Siddha-bābā Śrīla Jagannāth Dās Bābājī, Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur, Śrīla Gaura Kiśor Dās Bābājī, Śrīla Prabhupād, and other *guru-varga* took shelter of this holy abode and were fulfilled. There is no difference between Gaura Dhām and Vraja Dhām. Worshipping Kṛṣṇa in Gaura Dhām and worshipping Gaura in Kṛṣṇa Dhām is one and the same.

gauḍa-vraja-jane bheda nā heriba
 haiba baraja-bāsī

“I will see no difference between the residents of Gauda and the residents of Vraja, and I will become a resident of Vraja.”
(Śaraṇāgati, Siddhi-lālasā, 4)

If you circumambulate this transcendental abode in pure devotee association and follow Śrī Gurupādpadma, it makes Gaurasundar happy. Śrī Nabadvīp Maṇḍal and the banks of the Ganges, sanctified by the lotus footprints of Śrī Gaurasundar, arouse remembrance of the Lord’s magnanimous pastimes. One can get the mercy of Gaura by circumambulating the holy abode without deceit, chanting in the *kīrtan* inaugurated by Gaura Hari, following the footsteps of loving devotees. Except for the practise of *saṅkīrtan* in the association of devotees as instructed by Gaura, there is no other way or practice to attain His mercy. The true practice aimed at attaining divine love means giving up all other desires and practising devotional processes striving to please the Supreme Lord.

Devotees’ distinctive feature is that they see the entire material world in relation to the Lord, i.e. see all things as ingredients for the service of the Lord, not to try to satisfy their own senses through that but to use everything in the service of the Lord. Devotees become fixed in exclusive adherence to Gurudev and the perception of Gurudev as both an object of service and as a super servant, and very soon attain the result of following Kṛṣṇa consciousness (practices favourable to devotion)—they attain divine love, the true necessity of the *jīva* soul. Among the nine devotional practices, Śrī Gaura Hari gave special priority to Śrī *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* (*vāchak*, that which denotes the Lord). If you chant the Holy Name inaugurated by Gaura without offences, it will help you progress on the path towards divine love. If you nurture desires for fame, adoration, selfish gain, etc. within your heart, even if you chant the Holy Name, you will be forever deceived and will not attain divine love. Great souls said,

yadi karibe kṛṣṇa-nāma sādhu-saṅga kara
bhukti-mukti siddhi vāñchhā dūre pariha

“If you want to chant the Name of Krishna, then associate with sadhus and leave behind the desires for enjoyment, liberation, and mystic power.”

(Śrī Prema-vivarta, 7.3)

Except for satisfaction of the Lord, there are no other desires in the hearts of the highest devotees who dedicate their lives to *saṅkīrtan* in strict adherence to a great guru. Gaura Hari actually appears in the *kīrtan* of pure devotees. He is the father of *saṅkīrtan*. He incarnates within pure *kīrtan*. He has vested His entire power in *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*. If you strictly follow the main embodiment of shelter (*āśraya-vigraha*, Śrī Guru) and intently strive to satisfy the Lord, it makes Lord Gaurasundar very happy. Gaurasundar’s appearance means the appearance of pure *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*. If you do not chant the Holy Name following the method prescribed by Gaura, then instead of attaining the result (divine love), you will only create material garbage—and you will be cheated out of Gaura’s mercy. Gaurasundar appears through *kīrtan* in the hearts of those who sincerely take shelter of a bona fide guru and are eager to serve—He showers such surrendered souls with His mercy.



Devotion: the soul's ultimate happiness

At the onset of Kali-yuga, sixty thousand *rṣis* gathered in Naimiṣāraṇya and started a thousand-year-long fire sacrifice with a view to reach the abode of Lord Viṣṇu. Even though they did this very long sacrifice, they could not bring ultimate happiness to their hearts. One day, when they, as usual, finished placing the oblation into the sacrificial fire, they met Śrī Sūta Goswāmī (the son of Romaharṣan Muni and a disciple of Vedavyās). Śrī Sūta Goswāmī was an expert in all scriptures. He came to the assembly of Parīkṣit Mahārāj who had been cursed by a brāhmaṇa, and heard *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* from the mouth of Śrīa Śukadev Goswāmī. Although Śrīla Sūta Goswāmī was born into a lower than *brāhmaṇa* family, he possesses transcendental knowledge and has direct realisation of the Lord—therefore, the sages in Naimiṣāraṇya accepted him as their Guru and asked him six questions: what is ultimately good for a *jīva* soul? Through what practice or religion can the soul get ultimate happiness? and so on.

Approaching the questions of the sages with much respect, Śrī Sūta Goswāmīpād replied:

sa vai puṁsāṁ paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaituky apratihatā yayātmā suprasīdati

“The supreme occupation [dharma] for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendental Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self.”
(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 1.2.7)

No matter how many religious works a *jīva* soul performs according to its capacity, its main and topmost religion is

bhāgavat-dharma (devotion unto the Supreme Personality of God). Practising this topmost religion (devotion) brings complete satisfaction to one's soul (*ātma*). In Kali-yuga, *jīva* souls have a short lifetime, they are unfortunate, disturbed by diseases, and covered by all kinds of unwanted elements—if these *jīva* souls practise devotion to the Lord, i.e. if they can practise hearing, chanting, remembering, etc. of the Holy Names of the Lord, narrations about the Lord, and His pastimes and His qualities, they will get spiritual benefit and happiness. If you practise fire sacrifices, austerities, vows, etc.—anything except for devotion to the Supreme Lord Vāsudev—the soul will not attain the happiness of the soul. The authors of the scriptures say that this devotion is causeless and irresistible. Selfish undertaking, knowledge-seeking, fire sacrifices, etc. cannot obstruct such pure devotion. Just as the current of the Ganges automatically goes towards the ocean, in the same way, the unrestrained current of the Mandākinī river of devotion makes all kinds of happiness besides the happiness of devotion (i.e. the joy of enjoyment, the joy of liberation or the joy of realising the soul, the joy of attaining perfections) insignificant, and brings pure devotion to the heart of the devotees who are intent on attaining divine love. Such devotion is called 'exclusive', '*nirguṇā*', or 'direct' devotion. It is impossible to get such devotion by practising any religion that belongs to the three-modal material world created by Māyā (controlled by goodness, passion, ignorance, etc.). There is no cause or effect of devotion. The purpose of getting devotion is devotion itself. Devotion, the Lord, and devotee are all eternal and supra-mundane. However, how does one get devotion? This devotion comes by the mercy of Śrī Gurupādpadma (the embodiment of shelter, *āśraya-vigraha*) and the Supreme Lord (the object of worship, *viṣaya-vigraha*). Through *karma* and other practices, you can enjoy material world (gratify your material

senses), or get even more heavenly happiness, even attain the post of Brahmā, but such happiness is transient. The whole universe is destroyed at the time of universal devastation. “*Karmaṇām pariṇāmitvād ā-viriñchyād amarigalam*. An intelligent person should see that any material activity is subject to constant transformation and that even on the planet of Lord Brahmā there is thus simply unhappiness.” (SB, 11.19.18). It is not possible to get uninterrupted happiness or genuine happiness by practising any transient process (*karma*, etc.)—knowing the result of such practices to be perishable and transitory, knowledgeable persons leave all such practices and strive to become fixed in the plane of soul by practising renunciation, etc. and subsequently getting released from the happiness of material enjoyment. Even if a *jīva* soul is released from its conditioned state and experiences joy within this plane, it still cannot get eternal happiness and real peace of the soul. As long as an eternal, cognisant and blissful particle does not experience love for the great eternal, cognisant, and blissful Supersoul or the Supreme Lord (i.e. as long as the soul does not become fixed in the plane where the Lord is the object of service and a *jīva* is His servant and does not practise devotion by serving and worshipping the Lord), there is no way for the *jīva* soul to get real and eternal peace or happiness.

If you want to bring ultimate happiness to the soul, you should forget all practices like *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga*, etc. and eternally, attentively serve and worship the Lord—practise *śravaṇ* and *kīrtan* of the Lord’s qualities, pastimes, and glories. A spiritual practice accomplished through all senses is called *bhāgavad-dharma* or *bhakti-dharma* (transcendental religion, or religion of devotion). Devotion can be of two types—one is general devotion, and another is loving devotion. Serving, worshipping the Lord with all one’s senses, as well as practising *śravaṇ*, *kīrtan*, etc. of His qualities and pastimes with the goal of attaining loving devotion

is called practising devotion (*sadhana-bhakti*). Such practice matures into divine love. When practising devotion, practitioners naturally start feeling renunciation or apathy towards lower spiritual things, material things, enjoyment, etc.

There is a prescription found in the scriptures that advises *jīva* souls to follow *varṇāśrama* according to one's nature and qualities. If *jīva* souls, situated in one of the *varṇas* (*brāhmaṇ*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdrā*, etc.), practice the prescribed religion for a particular *āśram* according to their qualifications (*brahmacharya*, *gṛhasthya*, *vāṇaprastha*, *sannyās*, etc.), but do not feel taste for hearing and glorifying the Holy Name and pastimes of the Lord (the true eternal beneficial practices), then following this system of *varṇāśrama* will be useless. This truth is extolled in the crest jewel of all the revealed scriptures, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. “*Dharma-mūlam hi bhagavān*. The root of religion is the Supreme Lord.” The true purpose of following any religion is to make the Supreme Lord happy. If you practise religion focusing on the satisfaction of the Lord, you will get taste for Hari-kathā. To get this taste for the narrations about the Supreme Lord is the gist of all religious practices. The purpose or result of practising *varṇāśrama dharma* is not to become rich. The main purpose of religious practice is to awaken the enquiry about the transcendental truth. The transcendental truth is Brahma, Paramātmā and Bhagavān (impersonal universal form of the Lord, the localised all-pervading Supersoul, and the Supreme Personality of Godhead). If *jīva* souls become eager to serve any of the three aspects of the Lord, they can become free from the bondage of karma and attain the result without any hindrances. Pursuing knowledge allows one to come to the impersonal, non-variegated aspect of the Lord (*nirviśeṣ Brahma*); *yoga* grants one the *darśan* of the all-pervading Supersoul—in each of these cases *jīva* souls become released from the suffering and pain of

the material world, from death and birth, from unhappiness and struggle, but even then, liberation is not the highest and ultimate necessity of the *jīva* soul. The extreme necessity of the *jīva* soul is divine love for Godhead. By satisfying the Lord or by striving to make the Lord happy through the practice of devotional processes, one reaches the highest spiritual attainment—divine love for the Lord. Practice of devotion is extremely easy and effortless, unlike *jñāna*, *yoga*, etc., which involve a lot of struggle. The result of practising *jñāna*, *yoga*, etc. is attainment of liberation, mystic perfections, etc., but this result can be easily attained through practice of devotion.

Practice of devotion means engaging in hearing, chanting, remembering, etc. the Lord's Holy Name, qualities, pastimes, and glories. Great souls who possess divine vision have prescribed to eternally and attentively practise hearing, chanting, etc., Lord's glories. When practitioners of devotion continuously engage themselves in the worship of the Lord and discussions about the Lord, then hankering for religiosity, material prosperity, other desires, etc. find no place in their hearts. All secondary pursuits (bodily identification, ego, the world of "I" and "mine", etc.) that obstruct service to the Lord are completely removed. The Lord is the only object of service, and a *jīva* soul is His servant—the sword of such awakened consciousness severs all gross and subtle designations of the *jīva* soul. The taste for the narrations about the Lord does not come naturally, on its own, to those who are forever unfortunate and covered by unwanted elements. To awaken this taste in such souls, great souls who have divine vision prescribe to serve and worship the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudev, who assumes the form of a devotee possessing such taste for Hari-kathā. Continuous service to Śrī Gurudev, the greatest devotee, awakens faith and taste for the narrations about the Lord. Moreover, continuous hearing, chanting, remembering, etc. the Holy Name, qualities, pastimes

of the Lord in strict adherence to Śrī Guru removes all desires for selfish happiness, all types of unwanted elements, even desires for gain and fame, etc.—it completely cleanses and purifies one's heart. Such service to Śrī Gurupādpadma (the Lord manifest in the form of a devotee), hearing and reading holy *Bhāgavatam* (the Lord manifest in the form of a scripture) along with hearing, chanting the Lord's Holy Name, hearing and glorifying the pastimes of the Lord, etc. arouse eager taste or unflinching devotion to the Lord in the plane free of unwanted elements. At that time, the waves of lust, anger, etc. will not arise in one's heart—pure goodness will appear in one's heart throwing away all accumulated qualities of passion and ignorance. Attaining this state, practising devotees' eagerness to serve the Lord will increase in their pure hearts, enveloped in pure goodness. When practitioners practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness at every moment in the association of distinctive, kindred devotees, they attain the transcendental knowledge about the Lord through the influence of *samvit* (omniscient potency) and *Hlādinī* (ecstatic potency) of the Lord's internal potency. Attaining the state of freedom from all unwanted elements, such souls effortlessly attain steadiness and detachment and practise devotional life with all their senses; as a result of such practice they get the *darśan* of the Lord. This is the acme of practising life. If you are raised to this level, you will no longer have any trace of hesitation or doubt in your heart about the transcendental plane. Divine love appears within a heart radiating pure goodness. Until and unless divine love is awakened, you can neither see the Lord nor experience the highest devotional mellows—as much as the soul cannot attain supreme peace. If you want to find ultimate happiness or get eternal and real peace, all you need to do is to always practise pure devotion or *akiñchana-bhakti* (materially impoverished devotion) without any deceit—with the intent and eagerness to make the Lord happy.

Association and mercy of Śrī Gurupādpadma give divine love

Performing his pastimes, Śrī Gurupādpadma comes to this material world from the transcendental world to give surrendered souls the joy of association with the worshippable Lord. This guru current has been coming since time immemorial. Just as creation is going on eternally, so do the pastimes of the Lord's and His devotees' appearance are taking place eternally. The Lord performs His appearance pastimes in the form of a guru within the material world to bestow His pure mercy upon the *jīva* souls. As a result of the mercy and association of Śrī Gurupādpadma, *taṭasthā-śakti* (marginal potency) is transformed into a spiritual soul, i.e. a *jīva* soul has no other way except for service to the Lord if it wants to get eternal benefit or real happiness.

Generally, it is possible to see only material elements or practise only things related to the five material elements in this material world—it is not possible to practise transcendental practices. However, this material body and material existence comes from the transcendental plane. This cannot be denied. The Lord is present within the entire universe and all created material bodies as Paramātmā (the Supersoul). He is transcendental. *Jīva*, or *ātmā*, is His atomic particle. It is not possible for material vision or for the entities of flesh and blood to serve or behold the transcendental Supreme Lord or Supersoul. The *jīva* soul with its fleshy eyes has been ignorant of its own identity, the source of its identity (the Supersoul), and the Supreme Lord

since time immemorial, and because of it, the *jīva* soul has been covered by unwanted elements and ignorance, identifying itself with the body. Śrī Gurupādpadma, the knower of the *Vedas*, imparts divine knowledge about the self and the world unto the souls who have forgotten Kṛṣṇa and, liberating them from ignorance, guides them on the path to eternal spiritual benefit. Śrī Gurudev is the eternal object of the soul's love, he bestows the knowledge of the soul's relationship with the Lord (that the Lord is the master of the world, and the *jīva* soul is His servant—he establishes the soul within this eternal identity). When the *jīva* soul becomes fixed in this knowledge of the relationship, it becomes possible for it to practise transcendental processes. The highest contribution of Gauḍīya *guru-varga* is that they impart the spiritual knowledge about Kṛṣṇa onto the *jīva* souls and inspire them to serve Kṛṣṇa and Kāṣṭha (Kṛṣṇa and His devotees).

Kṛṣṇa and Kāṣṭha (the Lord and His devotee) are both transcendental, and the nature of the relationship between them is called devotion or divine love (*prema*). The devotees who take shelter of divine love always serve and love the object of their love—the Supreme Lord; the Lord also always relishes loving relationship with His exclusive devotees. Divine love is a transformation of Hlādinī, the personal energy of the Lord. This divine love is present between a devotee and the Lord—both experience this love and both relish it. A life without divine love ends without any result. Although Brahma (impersonal form of the Lord) and the Supersoul are considered to be parts of the Lord, divine love can be seen only within the Supreme Personality of Godhead (personal aspect of the Lord). The worshippers of impersonal Brahman and the *yogīs* who worship Paramātmā are happy with the realisation of their own form, but they cannot relish the play and pastimes of the Lord's internal potency. *Jñānīs* and *yogīs* receive liberation of merging into Brahman

and the Supersoul, respectively, and become also liberated from happiness, unhappiness, suffering, etc. Devotees, however, establish a loving relation with the Lord, and always strive to serve and please the Lord with all their senses, exclusively and continuously following their Śrī Gurupādpadma, their main shelter. If you live your life guided by the rules set by Gurudev himself, then the desire and eagerness to please the Lord will come within your heart. It is necessary to live following the restrictions and guidance given by Śrī Gurudev—by hearing and practising the instructions emanating from his lotus mouth, you can get love and devotion for the Lord. Devotion, of divine love, are eternally present in the land of Vaikuṇṭha and Goloka. Divine love is the highest necessity or attainment of the *jīva* soul. It is impossible for a *jīva* soul to love the Lord or to have devotion for the Lord without the shelter and mercy of Gurudev.

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

“Having travelled throughout the universe and got the mercy of Guru, Krishna, a fortunate soul receives a seed of the devotional creeper.”

(Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya-lila, 19.151)

Jīva souls travel throughout 8,400,000 species according to the result of their actions. They continue revolving in the circle of their actions, but if they get a merciful glance or association of Śrī Gurupādpadma, then they get a break from the bondage of *karma* and lose the taste for material enjoyment. If some thirst for material enjoyment is still not removed from your heart, then you must understand that you have not actually taken shelter of your guru. If even one drop of Śrī Guru’s mercy is showered upon you, you will overcome all kinds of obstacles on the path of devotion and feel more and more taste for the service of the Lord and service of His devotees. Deceit (insincerity) and hankering

for your own happiness remove the *jīva* soul from the path of devotion. Sincere devotees who do not have any other desires take shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Gurupādpadma and encourage themselves in their continuous service to Kṛṣṇa and Kāsṇa (Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees). Practising faith and *nirguṇā* devotion (devotion that lies beyond the three modes of material nature) leads to the attainment of divine love. The Lord becomes controlled by those devotees who have such *nirguṇā* devotion, or divine love. “Śrī Kṛṣṇākarṣṇī cha sā. Śrī Kṛṣṇa attracts everyone.” Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī and his followers (Gaudīya *guru-varga*) have particularly shown the brilliance of divine love that exists beyond the three modes of material nature.

If you want to practise such kind of *nirguṇā* devotion, you must always associate with pure devotees. With the association and mercy of loving devotees, you cannot come close to the Lord, what to speak of attaining love for the Lord.

mahat kṛpā binā kona karmme bhakti naya
kṛṣṇa-bhakti rahu dūre saṁsāra nahe kṣaya

“Without great mercy, you cannot attain the platform of devotional service. To say nothing of devotion for Kṛṣṇa, one cannot even be relieved from the bondage of material existence.”
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.22.51)

The embodiment of divine Lord, Śrī Gaurasundar, appears in this world with His associates and devotees and preaches about pure devotion setting the example by His own life. Even when they performed their disappearance pastimes, they nonetheless have kept two gifts within this world—one is the Lord manifest in the form of a guru and the other one is the Lord manifest in the form of the scriptures.

Gaudīya *guru-varga* give special emphasis to following the scriptures. When disciples learn the scriptures from a bona fide guru and with the desire to serve the Lord and the guru,

then their attachment to the material world, affection and sense of duty towards their relatives become weaker. When you come to listen to *Bhāgavatam*, it is not necessary have any material qualifications, rights, knowledge, or talents. If *jīva* souls surrender, make honest enquiry and hear *Bhāgavatam* in the association of Śrī Gurupādpadma, then such inquisitive souls will quickly progress on the path of pure devotion, developing faith, steadiness, taste and detachment. It is very easy to take up the path of service to the Lord, and the result (divine love) comes automatically. Other than this, there are only paths of Deity worship and mantra worship. The path of Deity worship depends upon many things and it takes time to get the result. In the path of Deity worship, practitioners worship the Deity through prescribed mantras, etc. These mantras and rules are found in *Nārada-pañcha-rātrā* and other scriptures. Many take the mantra from so-called hereditary gurus, but because there is a lack of realisation of the nature of the mantra and the nature of the Deity, even if one worships Deities for a long time, the power of the material world (*samsāra-śakti*) does not leave the worshipper of the mantra or the worshipper of the Deity. As a result, such practitioners are prevented from any progress on the path of pure devotion, and their desires for worship and fame take them away from the path of devotion. If one practices Deity worship and other devotional practices without any realisation about the Deity or the conception, then the effect of such practice can often be “cracking nuts with a śālagrām śilā.”* If you take shelter of a bona fide guru (a representative of the Lord) in whose heart

*A priest comes to offer some nuts to a śālagrām śilā, but in the meantime gets very hungry and starts shelling the nuts with the śālagrām śilā—service to the Lord turns into using the Lord for one's own pleasure.

the Name and the mantra reveal themselves, if you leave all other desires and engage in hearing and speaking about the Lord, if the feeling “You are not an idol, You are Vrajendra-nandan Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself!” comes to your heart—then there will be no need for any other artificial practices.

If you stay in the association and company of Śrī Gurupādpadma who both experiences and relishes divine love for the Lord, then exclusive happiness of Lord Kṛṣṇa becomes more important—when practitioners hear about the Lord with a service mood and honest enquiry, their hearts become clean and they establish themselves in servitude to the Lord. In this case, the Holy Name of the Lord that is the object of meditation of the liberated souls, easily and naturally reveals itself.

The super-excellence of the mercy of Gauḍīya *guru-varga* is such that they nurture and nourish us guiding us on the path of pure devotion, initiating us into this line and continuously teaching us about the transcendental Lord. If fortunate souls get even a drop of their caring compassion, they can always, at every moment, dip and immerse themselves into the narrations about the Lord and services to the Lord that are like an ocean of the nectarean divine love. The genuine affection of their inexhaustible mercy and association cannot even compare to parental love.



All Glory to Śrī Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga

Śrī Śrīla Guru Mahārāj’s holy discourses Subject: “Rare human birth and spiritual practice”

Praying for the mercy of the most worshippable holy lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Guru-varga, we are going to hear about the holy practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness (“Śrī Śrī Hari-bhajan”).

labdhvā su-durlabham idam bahu-sambhavānte
mānuṣyam artha-dam anityam apīha dhīraḥ
tūrṇam yateta na pated anu-mṛtyu yāvan
niḥśreyasāya viṣayaḥ khalu sarvataḥ syāt

“After many, many births and deaths one achieves the rare human form of life, which, although temporary, affords one the opportunity to attain the highest perfection. Thus a sober human being should quickly endeavor for the ultimate perfection of life as long as his body, which is always subject to death, has not fallen down and died. After all, sense gratification is available even in the most abominable species of life, whereas Kṛṣṇa consciousness is possible only for a human being.”

(Srimad Bhagavatam, 11.9.29)

Human birth is very rare

We had passed many births before attaining this human birth. It is not true that we had not existed before this birth or that this birth is our first birth. Before attaining this human birth we had been born in many kinds of bodies and died also many times. “Bahu-sambhavānte” means after many, many births we have attained this extremely rare human birth. This is true, but there is no certainty that we are human in this life and after death we will

again get a human birth. Our present birth was determined by our activities (*karma*) in previous lives, and the activities in this lifetime will also determine our future birth. The kind of next life one gets depends on what one is doing or not doing at present. Sometimes a *jīva* soul is born as a worm, sometimes as an insect, sometimes as a beast, sometimes as a bird, and sometimes as a human—in this way, the *jīva* soul revolves in the circle of birth and death. We may have had a human birth before, and now we have got it again. One way or another, although this human birth is very rare, we have got it at present.

Misuse of the human birth is sure path to degradation

However, when we leave this body, it is not guaranteed that we will again be born as human. This cannot be said for sure. There is a evolution theory that we evolve in this way—grass, bushes, creepers, worms, insects, beasts, birds, monkeys, then humans. But if we assume that evolution exists, then we must accept that devolution also exists. This is reasonable. If you can be promoted, you can also be demoted. If there is birth, there must be death as well. Just as there is progress, there is also regress. Just as promotion is determined by one's merit, one's demotion is also determined by one's demerit. By the power of evolution, we have now got this human birth as a result of our pious activities or good activities, but if we cannot keep it up, then we will have to go down. Who can arrest this inevitable effect? If we do not use this human birth wisely, then we will inevitably get a lower birth in future. In such case, degradation is quite possible. Who will be able to check it? We can give an example of a judge to understand this matter. A judge is given the responsibility to dispense justice. If the judge does not carry out his responsibility properly and only passes wrong judgement, his demotion or degradation will be quite certain.

A human birth is fragile but in this human birth it is possible to attain supreme spiritual wealth; the Lord is the wealth, and everything else is unwanted

After many births we have attained this human birth. No matter how this happened, it is a very rare birth, and if we do not use this life wisely it is quite possible that we can fall down. A human birth is not eternal—it is temporary. Humans will not stay human forever. Just as it is not true that one will be always born in a male body or in a female body or one will always be born on this planet or in India; it is also not true that this body will last forever. This body can be destroyed at any moment. Therefore, this human birth is both temporary and fragile. However, even though this human birth is transitory, there is a privilege or an advantage in it. It is possible to attain spiritual benefit in this temporary human birth. Therefore, this human birth is very valuable. Humans can attain the supreme or best wealth, that is they can attain the love of Godhead (Kṛṣṇa-prema). It is not possible to attain this supreme wealth if one is born as a tree, as an insect, as a dog, etc. Some may say that among animals Vajrāṅga-jī Hanumān and Jāmbumān and among birds Garuḍa have attain that supreme wealth in this world. These are exceptions. Common worms, insects, beasts, birds, demons, monsters, can serve the Lord, but they cannot have any conception about the Lord. However, if man wants to, he can pray and worship the Lord. Humans have been given a full possibility to attain the supreme wealth in their life. That wealth (*artha*) is not money, material wealth, youth, sense-gratification or name and fame—these things are trifles and vile, and actually unwanted (*anartha*). Still, we consider *anartha* to be wealth, that is because unless you have the supreme wealth, you will consider all those things covetable, and we are not satisfied with those things—we always feel we lack it. The true wealth is

the Lord, He is the only necessity of a *jīva* soul. Except for the Lord everything is *anartha* (unwanted, undesirable), He is the only covetable goal (wealth, *artha*).

Human birth is the highest and the ultimate purpose of life is service to the Lord

It is possible to get the Lord in this very human birth. That is why a human birth is considered more valuable than even a birth as a demigod. In terms of the possibility to get benefit, this human birth is the highest. Demigods more or less always live engrossed in happiness and enjoyment. There are devotees among demigods, it is true, but mostly they do not engage in the service of the Lord or practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness; they live in forgetfulness of the Lord. This human birth offers a very special opportunity—a full possibility to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to please the Lord and to attain the Lord. Humans get eyes, ears, nose, mind, intelligence and ego. The mind judges and decides what to accept and what to reject; the intelligence judges what is good and what is bad. Other species do not have the power of self-realisation or remembrance. The ability to meditate or the power to pray is bestowed on humans as a special or highest gift. It is not true that the human mind is filled with only animality—it also possesses rationality, continuity of thought, memory, etc. However, dogs, beasts or birds do not have such intelligence. Therefore, a human body can connect with higher, spiritual life, which is not possible in any other species. Humans have all facility through which they can feel or have a conception about the Lord. Humans can serve the Lord, they can have the *darśan* of His holy form, hear His Hari-kathā, chant His glories (engage in His *kirtan*), they can worship and pray to the Lord. Even though this human birth is temporary, but within this short time it presents an opportunity to meditate upon the Lord, to know

the Lord, to pray to the Lord and serve Him. One may live a very short time, but even within this short time it is possible to get the Lord. This is not some utopian, theoretical or vile talks, this is a practical matter. Very fortunate humans have attained the Lord. Many humans have attained perfection in their practice, not to mention those who have attained eternal perfection. If you use this fragile human birth to worship the Lord, you can attain the result, i.e. you can attain the Lord. There are many examples of such attainment in the past and it happens even at present also.

**Human birth is valuable; if one is to cross the ocean of
material existence, it is only possible through
the guidance of the boatman (Śrī Guru)**

If somebody can attain something, you too can attain it if you want to. If it is possible for others to attain the Lord in this human birth, then why is it not possible for me? That is why this human birth is considered so valuable. The highest goal of life is to attain the Lord, to become a servant of the Lord, and to serve the Lord. (Cc 2.20.108) “*Jīvera ‘svarūpa’ haya—krṣṇera nitya dāsa:* all *jīva* souls are actually eternal servants of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.” It is possible to attain this eternal form in this human birth, you must only want it. If I want to attain this, then even though my lifespan is very short, I can still get the Lord, or at least I can advance down the path towards Him. There is also another advantage in this human birth. The eternally liberated associates or servants of the Lord who have attained perfection through their practice assume human bodies similar to ours and come to the human plane, i.e. within the material world, walking right among us. On this planet, these devotees possessing eternal perfection do not come in animals’, worms’ or celestial beings’ bodies, they assume human bodies and live among us even now. If you embrace this opportunity to have their association, then your human life will

be successful. Some may ask why do we show so much partiality towards humans? Why do we display so much favouritism? Why cannot cats, dogs, etc. get this? There is no point in raising this argument. If we can know what we as humans can get or will get, this is our advantage. Human species get an opportunity to hear the instruction of the Lord's devotees, to serve them and to live following their guidance. Assuming human bodies, great souls approach us—this is the causeless mercy the Lord extends to us. We have an opportunity to connect and associate with the associates of the Lord. Such great souls can become the proper helmsmen of our boat of life that is floating in the stormy waters of the ocean of material existence that is very difficult to cross. Therefore, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (11.20.17) says,

nṛdeham ādyam su-labham su-durlabham
 plavam su-kalpam guru-karṇadhāram
 mayānukūlena nabhasvateritam
 pumān bhavābdhim na taret sa ātma-hā

"The human body, which can award all benefit in life, is automatically obtained by the laws of nature, although it is a very rare achievement. This human body can be compared to a perfectly constructed boat having the spiritual master as the captain and the instructions of the Lord as favourable winds impelling it on its course. Considering all these advantages, a human being who does not utilize his human life to cross the ocean of material existence must be considered the killer of his own soul."

We can accept one of the eternally liberated associates of the Lord as our boatman. The Lord has given us this opportunity to get their association as they are very near us—they walk amongst us, assuming the appearance similar to ours. They speak our language. We have a chance to receive connection with such great souls. That is why this human birth is even more precious. It is impossible to know or get the Lord without their guidance. If I want to attain all this, I should accept their guidance.

**With proper utilisation of the will power,
it is possible to attain the Lord**

The problem is that I do not accept such a *bhava-rog* doctor and keep running behind primitive desires. I want to become a millionaire, I want to have a longer life, I want to be a great poet, I want to become the prime-minister, etc. But if I want to, I can also aspire for spiritual benefit. Humans have the power to utilise their will power. If humans want, they can run behind money, knowledge, fame; they can run behind poets, politicians or scientist, but if they want to, they can also follow the order of devotees and run behind devotees of the Lord. If you run behind devotion, devotees and the Lord, you will get the supreme benefit in this life. There is no doubt about it. If you want, you can drink blood, eat meat and gnaw at bones, and if you want, you can also leave all this and take *prasād*. Lions or tigers cannot leave meat, blood, etc., but that is why you are a human—you have intelligence and the power of judgement, you can give up eating impure foods. You are not fossil—you have will power, and you can use this will power wisely. I can go to a temple, I can have the *darśan* of the Lord; and if I want to, I can also go to a club or a cinema-hall. I can go to any vile place I want, and if I want to, I can also go to a temple and have the *darśan* of the devotees. The greatest advantage of this human birth is that great souls can help us find the Lord, they can tell us about the spiritual kingdom. They can establish the Lord forever in our hearts, they can enable us to get His *darśan* and association. They can remove all wicked desires (hankering for self-establishment, hunger for wealth, etc.) from our hearts and, instead, install the Lord there; they can awaken the possibility of attaining the spiritual world. Such great souls take on human bodies and walk among humans.

What are the obstacles on the path of practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

"If we start practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then our old parents will be very distressed. My young wife will cry and be broken-hearted, and my small children will have to roam the streets. I cannot do that, I have to look after all of them now. I am their protector, their master and guardian. They are my immediate concern, they are my dependants, I have my duty towards them. It is my religious duty to take care of them." If your fortune awakens, then you will be able to understand—how many days will you have the relationship with them? How much happiness are you able to give them? How much benefit can you give to them? If you give a million rupees to a mourning mother who has lost her son, how much comfort will your money give her? You certainly cannot return her son. "I am the king," "I am a subject," "I am the master"—you have become intoxicated with these petty designations. This is a foolish sentiment, a childish thinking; such mentality is not permanent. You can understand all this from the association of great souls.

Pleasure of the Lord is the highest peace

Vaikuṇṭha can wait, eternal happiness can just go, and the Lord can stay far away from me—I must now look after my wedded wife! You are blind, you are deaf. Your heart does not want to call out to the Lord and chant, "Hari!", "Kṛṣṇa!" Hearing Hari-kathā pours poison into your ears, and radio, TV and mobile phones shower nectar into your ears. "Mother," "Father," "Grandpa," "My boy," "My little girl"—hearing all these words our heart starts dancing. Hearing someone call us "grandpa" makes our heart melt and we think there is no greater joy on earth than this. Such transient relationships hurl us down—they

encourage us down the path of self-forgetfulness. Great souls come to remove such illusion and to show us the path leading to the spiritual kingdom.

They carefully explain the eternal happiness that the transcendental message and the transcendental Name can give. By their mercy, you can understand that transcendental message is not some radio song. If one wants to, one can hear their advice and try to wake up and get on with their life. Therefore, great souls say,

kāmādīnāṁ kati nā katidhā pālitā durnideśā-
teṣāṁ jātā mayi na karuṇā na trapā nopaśāntih
utsṛjyaitān atha yadu-pate! sāmpratam labdha-buddhis
tvām āyātaḥ śaraṇam-abhayam mām niyunksvātma-dāsyे

“O Lord! How many kinds of wicked orders from lust and others I followed! They had no mercy on me, nor were they ever satisfied! O Kṛṣṇa! Suddenly, I managed to leave their side and got some good intelligence—I have surrendered at Your fearless lotus feet, please engage me now as Your servant.”

(Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, 3.2.35)

“How long I have been running behind all these material desires, hopes and inauspicious things! And I am still running behind them. But have I got any happiness or peace from that? O Yadupati! Please engage me in Your service. Overwhelmed by material desires, how many wicked requests, how many orders I have carried out listening to the material desires coming to me in the form of a charming shrew! I have destroyed so much of my health and money on that, but even then neither they have ever had any pity on me, nor have I felt any shame. O Prāṇanāth! Besides You I have no other way, I understand it now. I am throwing away all these material hopes and come to search for eternal happiness. O merciful Lord! Let me run away from all this enjoyment of the material world. O Lord, please save me

from the sense of all these fleeting obligations. I no longer have any regard for this kind of religion that binds me to fulfilling material duties.

nāsthā dharme na vasu-nichaye naiva kāmopabhoge
yadyadbhāvyam tadbhavatu bhagavan pūrva-karmānurupam
etat prārthyam mama bahu-mataṁ janma-janmāntare 'pi
tvat-pādāmbho-ruha-yuga-gatā niśchalā bhaktir astu

"O Lord, I have no faith in religiosity, economic development, or sense enjoyment. May all these things come to pass as they are ordained, according to my previous karma. But my earnest prayer is that birth after birth I may have unflinching devotion for Your lotus feet."

"I have done so many things, but I see that nothing can bring me supreme peace. Please, give me eternal (birth after birth) service to your lotus feet. Please engage me in the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Let me become fixed in the servitude to your lotus feet." This is the wealth that one can attain in a human birth, that is the supreme peace. "May what I am created for be realised."

**Material things are available in any species,
but because this life is not eternal
you must always worship the Supreme Lord**

Rūpa-rasa-gandha-sparśa (objects for the eye-, tongue-, nose-, and skin-pleasure) are spread all around me—it is not even necessary to make any effort to acquire them. It is possible to get these things in any life, at any time. This opportunity to enjoy sense gratification, to enjoy food and things is available in any life form, be it a bird or a beast, a human or a monkey. You do not even have to perform any austerity to get it. It is available even in the species of lower planes of life. It is not necessary to make any special endeavour or effort to obtain all that. Even those who

maintain their life in a very low and vile way get all these things easily. Material things are available in any life form, but devotion to the Lord, devotional practice and satisfaction of the Lord is not possible in any other life form. You must earnestly practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness until the very moment you fall down facing death because death is always running behind you—there is no certainty as to when it will grasp you. There are pharmacies at each corner on the street, there is an abundance of doctors—how many drugs are discovered every day; but has anyone been able to check death? No matter how many medicines you may discover, Yamarāj too creates and sends new diseases. Yamarāj can destroy thousands of people within a moment. We can see that nobody can tell through which gap death will come. Therefore, it is necessary to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness now.

You think, "I am twelve, now is the time to study. I am thirty, I am a newly married husband, we are young, so now is the time to enjoy. I reach middle age—I must now provide for my children. When I grow old, then I will practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness. O Lord! When I become old, I will call out for You." But you should think—in your old age, all your body will become weak; that drive and enthusiasm that you have when you are young will fade out; your health will go down; you will not even be able to move without having somebody to pull you, so at that time even if you want to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you will not have the capacity to do it.

“jīvana-samāpti-kāle kariba bhajana
 ebe kari gr̄hasukha
 kakhana e-kathā nāhi bali vijñā-jana
 e deha patanonmukha”

“I will practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness at the end of my life. Now I will enjoy family life’—knowledgeable people never say such things. This body is about to fall dead at any time.”

It is impossible to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness at old age

Many think that when they become sixty, then they will start practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but what if they expire before that? Life is uncertain, it is like a drop of water tottering on the edge of a petal of a lotus—it can fall at any moment. Sixty years old is the retired life. You will be busy lying in bed, counting days to your death. You think, “I will call on to You in my retired life”—these are not words of a wise person; these are words of a person trying to cheat the Lord. You will not be able to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness when you are old, you will not be able to concentrate, you will not get taste for practising. Whatever nature and habits you have acquired as a result of your previous actions will give you much pressure—you will neither be able to overcome it, nor tolerate it.

There is no consideration of proper and improper time for practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness

“*Prāktana vāyura vega sahitē na pari*: I cannot stand the urge of the past.” (*Kalyāṇ-kalpataru*) Therefore, wherever you are, you must start practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness from today, do not delay it. Once time passes, it is gone. There is no prescribed time for practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness, therefore do not wait for any time to start practising; start practising right now. Whether you are studying, whether you are teaching, it does not matter—do not dawdle, get on with your devotional practice. It is best if you can practise from an adolescent age.

kaumāra ācharet prājño dharmān bhāgavatān iha
durlabham mānuṣam janma tad apy adhruvam arthatām
tato yateta kuśalaḥ kṣemāya bhayam āśritaḥ
śarīram pauruṣam yāvan na vipadyeta puṣkalam

[*Prahlaḍ Mahārāj said:*] “One who is sufficiently intelligent should use the human form of body from the very beginning of

life (from the tender age of childhood) to practise the activities of devotional service, giving up all other engagements. The human body is most rarely achieved, and although temporary like other bodies, it is meaningful because in human life one can perform devotional service. Even a slight amount of sincere devotional service can give one complete perfection. Therefore, while in material existence, a person fully competent to distinguish wrong from right must try to achieve the highest goal of life as long as the body is stout and strong and is not embarrassed by dwindling.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 7.6.1)

The highest meaning of human life is in devotional practice

The very meaning of human life is to awaken the longing to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Have you come to this world to become a “mummy” or a “daddy”? The Universal Father has sent you here so that you call out to the Supreme Lord, so that you worship the Supreme Lord. You are created for this very purpose—to spend your life serving the Lord. You have got this human birth, you have taken birth in this pure land of Bhārata (India). You can often hear Bhagavat-kathā, you have got a chance to see the Lord’s great devotees—those who do not want to cross this ocean of material existence having got such a fit helmsman, are committing suicide. Those who get such great opportunities but ignore them are misusing their human life. It is necessary to understand this. As a result of such misuse, you will not get a human birth again. Depending on the actions you perform in this birth you will get a corresponding body next life. “*Punar mūḍiko bhava.*”* Traversing different planes of life

* “Again Become a Mouse.” Once, a mouse was harassed by a cat. It approached a saintly person and asked him to turn it into a cat. When the mouse became a cat, it was harassed by a dog; when the cat became a dog, it was harassed by a tiger; but when the dog became a tiger, it stared at the saintly person—the saintly person asked the tiger, “What do you want?” the tiger said, “I want to eat you”; then the saintly person cursed it, saying, “May you again become a mouse!”

in different lifetimes, sometimes you may also go down to lower species. There is no certainty. How many lifetimes will you cry? Your heart will be torn apart out of grief and sadness; how much austerity you will have to undergo goaded by the want and pain of illnesses!

durlabha-mānava janma labhiyā saṁsāre
kṛṣṇa nā bhajinu, duḥkha kahiba kāhāre?

"I have got a very rare human life in this world, but I have not worshipped Lord Kṛṣṇa. Whom can I tell of my misery?"

'saṁsāra''saṁsāra' kari' michhe gela kāla
lābha nā haila kichhu, ghaṭila jaṣjala

"Time has passed as I have been busy in my material life, and I have got nothing—only became burdened."

When you get a human birth, you get not only intelligence, but also good association. Such great opportunity has come before you, if do not care for it and lose it, then you will burn in the agony of pain. If you want to get eternal and supreme peace in the transcendental world, then you must start practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness from now—then you must get eternal benefit.

vāśchhā-kalpatarubhyaś cha kṛpā-sindhubhya eva cha
patitānām pāvanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ

"Again and again I offer my obeisance unto the Supreme Lord's devotees, who are saviours of the fallen, oceans of mercy, and wish-fulfilling trees."



Supremely Magnanimous Śrī Gaurasundar

Place: Śrī Gaura Gambhīrā, Śrī Dhām Puri

This *gambhīrā* is a place where Lord Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar performed His pastimes. This place is worshippable not only for the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavs, but also for all living souls. Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar is eternally present here, this is His eternal place of pastimes (*līlā-sthalī*). When I have got the cordial invitation from the *goswāmīs* who look after the very heart of this place, I consider it to be the mercy of Lord Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar Himself. He is so merciful, He has cast His side-long glance upon this insignificant person—as a result, His highly qualified servitors have immersed me in such a great blessing. If one offers his full obeisance at this eternally worshippable place, if one rolls on the ground in the dust of this place, and if one takes the dust of this place on his head, or gets a chance to render some smallest help to this place, then his life becomes very fulfilled.

We consider that one's life is supremely fortune if one gets an opportunity to do any service to this *gambhīrā*. Seated here in *gambhīrā* and taking the mercy and blessings of you all on our heads, we have got an incredible opportunity to speak about the causeless mercy of Śrī Gaurasundar.

**By nature, jīvas are servants of Kṛṣṇa, but they are
averse to Him from time immemorial**

By their nature, *jīva* souls are servants of Kṛṣṇa, they come from the marginal energy of Kṛṣṇa and are simultaneously one

with and different from the Lord. Coming from the marginal energy means *jīva* souls are both expansions of Supersoul (internal energy of the Lord) and at the same time subject to the influence of Māyā (external, or illusory potency of the Lord). It is impossible to say at what time a soul becomes averse to the Lord. *Jīva* soul is eternal. At some point during the creation, ignorance (aversion to the Lord) envelopes the soul. The scriptures say that there is no particular discernible time when this happens. The composers of the scriptures and knowers of the truth are not gripped by this darkness—they are not swayed by the words of people, reading books or callous intellectualism. We must accept the announcement made by the great souls who have realised the truth. Both what they express and preach and what comes through the channel of the *Vedas* is the truth. According to their realisation and preaching, *jīva* souls originate from the marginal energy of the Lord and are expansions of the Supersoul, and their aversion to the Lord spans from time immemorial.

Soul that forget Kṛṣṇa are attacked by Māyā

kṛṣṇa bhuli' sei jīva anādi-bahirmukha
ataeva māyā tāre deya samsārādi-duḥkha

“Having forgotten Kṛṣṇa, the soul wanders throughout the universe. Being thus covered by illusion, the soul goes through all kinds of material suffering.”

(Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya-lila, 20.117)

The *jīva* souls that forgot their true identity have lost their eternal relationship with the eternally worshippable Supreme Lord. As a result, Māyā, the external illusory potency of the Lord, catches them. Thus, these *jīva* souls who have forgotten Kṛṣṇa, not being able to remember their own identity, roam in the darkness birth after birth having lost Kṛṣṇa. Māyā has no influence or mastery over those who have not forgotten Kṛṣṇa

(who are established in their true identity). Those who forget Kṛṣṇa become attacked by Māyā, they fall into this kind of disastrous, unconscious state. Disaster means they forget their own identity. Unconscious means their true identity is concealed. The conditioned souls that forget their true identity are constantly attacked by the three-fold miseries (*ādhyātmik*, *ādhyibhautik*, and *ādhidaivik*—miseries caused by one's body, by other souls, and by nature). Seeing this terrible condition of the souls, merciful Lord arranges the means of salvation from this misery—to free the souls from this conditioned state and save them, the merciful Lord sends His own associate. These great souls also become distressed and try to remove the painful misery of the souls. Before the appearance of Śrī Gaurasundar, Śrī Advaita Prabhu became extremely distressed to see the suffering of the *jīva* souls—he tried to remove this misery himself, but none of the *jīva* souls responded to that. Then, Śrī Advaita Prabhu started worshipping the Lord with the water from the Ganga and some Tulasi leaves and crying out to the Lord, “Please remove their suffering!” Praying in this way, he submitted his distressed prayer to the Lord. Hearing His devotee’s distressed call, the Lord could not remain peaceful in Goloka—He appeared in this material world.

“*Nidrābhaṅga haila mora nādāra huṅkāre*—I suddenly woke up from the tremor aroused by a cry.”

Śrī Gaurasundar’s appearance in response to Śrī Advaita Prabhu’s call

Śrī Advaita Prabhu is extremely merciful to the *jīva* souls, that is why he is called ‘*Śrī Gaura-ānā Ṭhākur*’ (the Lord who brings Śrī Gaura)—Śrī Gaurasundar came answering to his fervent call and heart-felt, deep crying.

Jīva souls are always busy enjoying illusion (*māyā*). They are always intoxicated by the enjoyment with various things—wife,

sons, daughters, community, body, country. Souls spread out these temporary relationships and live their life continuously enjoying with that. However, *jīva* souls are servants of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa by their intrinsic nature, they are not enjoyers by their nature. It is to save these souls from the danger of such self-forgetfulness that Śrī Advaita Prabhu had called Śrī Gaurasundar. Many of you know how deplorable was the nature and situation in the society and religion before Śrīman Mahāprabhu's appearance. It is sufficient to say that there was no worship of the Lord or devotion at all. People used to sing songs in praise of Maṅgalachanḍī (Durgā Devī) and Maṇasā (goddess of snakes). That too they did without a heart beat—only some external show. When religion fell into this deplorable state in India, Śrī Gaurasundar appeared answering Śrī Advaita Prabhu's call. Śrī Gaurasundar is Kṛṣṇa Himself—Kṛṣṇa and Gaura are one and the same. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa becomes liberal, or magnanimous, He becomes Gaura, and when Śrī Gaurasundar becomes sweetness incarnate, He becomes Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa and Gaura are one *tattva*, the only difference between Them is Their pastimes.

Magnanimity and mercy are predominant in the pastimes of Śrī Gaurasundar, and sweetness is instinctively prominent in the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. All pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are worshipped by the liberated souls—Vraja *gopīs* are not conditioned souls. Whereas, the pastimes of Śrī Gaurasundar are the pastimes of a rescuer of the fallen. Perfected, liberated, self-realised souls, as well as the souls who have attained divine love, who relish the divine mellows and ecstasy participate in His pastimes in Vraja Dhām. Pastimes of Kṛṣṇa feature neutrality, servitude, friendship, parenthood and consorthood. Pastimes in Vṛndāvan, Mathurā and Dvārakā are the places of Kṛṣṇa's consorthood pastimes. Actually, there is a difference and peculiar features in these pastimes. Jagad-guru Śrī Advaita Prabhu wanted to bring the *mādhurya-līla* Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa who enjoys consorthood

pastimes) to remove the pain and sorrow of this world, that is why Kṛṣṇa had to descend taking the mood of magnanimity and the mood of a rescuer of the fallen.

"O Gaura, O Nitāi! You, two brothers, are the friends of the fallen."

Śrī Gaurasundar appeared in the form of a friend to save those who are fallen, strayed from the right path, who are submerged in inauspicious life, who are suffering, to save sinners and offenders. As for those who relish divine love and devotional mellites, Śrī Gaurasundar performed in their association His pastime of relishing devotional mood. There is only a handful of such devotees though. Mostly He appeared and manifested His magnanimous pastimes for the sake of those who are fallen and low, attacked by material desires and sense gratification—as well as those who, proud of their education and knowledge, always lead inauspicious life and have no Krṣṇa consciousness whatsoever. To rescue the fallen persons Śrī Gaurasundar sent Nitāi Ṭhākur and Haridās Ṭhākur. Nitāi, the worshippable embodiment of divine love, first caught two notorious drunkards Jagāi and Mādhāi. Haridās Ṭhākur said, “We have nearly died today coming to the zone of those drunkards.” But the giver of divine love, Nitāi Ṭhākur, answered, “If you see fallen souls and avoid them, then Śrī Gaurasundar’s magnanimous pastimes will not be revealed fully.” If the merciful to the poor souls Lord has come, then He has come for such souls—He never keeps the fallen souls far off; He is the rescuer of the fallen souls.” To save these fallen souls Nitāi Ṭhākur had to shed much blood. The land of Nabadwīp was moistened with a flow of His pure blood. Yet, did He stop giving divine love?

Gaura-Nitāi are the friends of the fallen

In this world, all *jīva* souls are given to enjoyment and sensual pleasures. I am a woman, I am a man, I am from this and that area—everyone is full of such ego. How far divine love is! Entrance into the sacred (intimate) pastimes in the association of Śrī Svarūpa Damodar and Śrī Rāmānanda Rāy is extremely far for the afflicted, unfortunate souls—it is obstructed. Even if one gets a tiny drop of that divine love, that is generally not even discussed. We are engrossed into unwanted habits, we are all fallen—we do not have any right to taste this transcendental and sacred pastimes. How many realised souls who have attained perfection are there among us? Pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa have nothing to do with magnanimity—these pastimes do not display compassion or mercy. There is no question of that. His pastimes are mainly filled with sweetness and enjoyment. These pastimes are with those rich souls who possess the wealth of divine love. The pastimes of Śrī Gaura are with those who are ignorant, destitute and miserable. When Gaura came, He did not come alone—He came with His like-minded associates.

**Śrī Gaurasundar is the bestower of the extremely
rare gift of divine love, that is why He is greatly
magnanimous**

The associates in the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are *gopīs*, *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs*. In the magnanimous pastimes of Śrī Gaurasundar, this mood does not exist. It is natural that although He is Kṛṣṇa, when He came to manifest magnanimous pastimes, He had to assume another form and mood. How did Śrī Gaurasundar manifest His magnanimous pastimes? Nobody called Him the greatest giver (*mahādātā*) or greatly magnanimous (*mahāvadānya*). Why is He then extremely magnanimous? Because He has given

such a gift by which the recipients were completely satisfied—there was no feeling of any want left. Such gift is not liberation. The gift He bestowed in an unlimited quantity upon all *jīva* souls, going door to door, is divine love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa-prema). Desire for liberation or peace are all cheating. We want peace, we do not want misery—love of and desire for peace or one's own sense-gratification is called lust; and “the desire to please the senses of Lord Kṛṣṇa is divine love (*Kṛṣṇendriya-prīti-ichchhā dhare ‘prema’ nāma*)”—such divine love is extremely rare. It is very rare not only because it removes the pain of repeated births and deaths, not because it puts an end to all endless sufferings—Kṛṣṇa-prema allows one to reach the transcendental Lord. He is the giver of Kṛṣṇa-prema, therefore He is extremely magnanimous (*mahāvadānya*). To realise one's own form means to attain divine love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa—it means the *jīva* soul attains servitude to the Lord. Service is the pride of a servant. That which bestows servitude automatically uproots all three-fold miseries. Śrī Advaita Prabhu did not call the Lord only for this. May all *jīva* souls of the world get Kṛṣṇa-prema, may all suffering of the souls cease and may they all get love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and attain His supreme abode—may they no longer enjoy forgetfulness of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this material world under the influence of illusion. Therefore, Śrī Gaurasundar is greatly magnanimous, He is the giver of the greatest gift.

Kṛṣṇa-prema is distributed through Nāma-saṅkīrtan

How did Śrī Gaurasundar give this extremely rare gift of Kṛṣṇa-prema? He is all-potent Supreme Lord, He is the Supreme Controller. If He wanted, Kṛṣṇa-prema would come at once. In some places, it did happen like this, but in Nabadwīp, He distributed Kṛṣṇa-prema through *Nāma-saṅkīrtana*. This is unprecedented, and the method He chose is unheard of, hitherto

unseen and unthinkable. The divine love that one cannot get even through practising much austerity, sacrifices, worship, meditation—Śrī Gaurasundar squandered that divine love everywhere; and the vehicle or the instrument through which He bestowed that divine love among the general public, to all souls high and low, is *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*. Everybody can practise this *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*. It is necessary to give the highest thing and it is necessary to give it to everybody, therefore He introduced *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* to spread the gift of Kṛṣṇa-prema. Even brāhmans, śūdras, low-borns and dog-eaters can easily receive this greatest wealth—Śrī Gaurasundar has introduced a suitable arrangement for that. A *non-brāhmaṇ* cannot worship a Deity, so if Śrī Gaurasundar had instructed *jīva* souls to worship Deities, then His generosity would have been restricted. That is why He has given *saṅkīrtan* and along with that He said, “There is no other path in Kali-yuga. Such highest attainment is not possible to get through meditation, worship, austerity or various sacrifices.” The Lord has vested all power within His Holy Name. The entire power of magnanimity is vested inside the Holy Name of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (“*nām-nāmakāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis-tatrārpitā...*”).

The Lord's entire power of magnanimity is vested within *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*

No matter how small a *jīva* soul can be, no matter how unqualified it can be, but it is necessary to give them the highest gift—that is why Śrī Gaurasundar has vested His entire magnanimity in congregational chanting of the Holy Name (*Nāma-saṅkīrtan*). There is another, quite esoteric, point. He has mercifully vested the power of His internal pleasure-giving potency (Hlādini) into the practice of chanting of the Holy Name. *Jīva* souls sin. *Jīva* souls are hen-pecked, they always look for money, their minds always swarm with various material

desires. *Jīva* souls want name and fame, knowledge, there is no end of their hopes and desires. All such people can take the Holy Name and chant it. "There is no consideration whether one is qualified or not—whatever falls in front of Me, I embrace them. I have taken the result of all the karma you have accumulated in all your births. As soon as you join the chanting of the Holy Name and dance, divine love will at once spring within you; all your material desires will be paralysed." The magnanimous effect of congregational chanting of the Holy Name is such that you can even get admission into the conjugal mellow of divine relationship with the Lord (*ujjvala-rasa*). Because He has vested all His magnanimity with the Holy Name, Hlādinī-śakti is inevitably there within it—such is His intrinsic disposition. "The Holy Name arises immediately when devotees chant *kīrtan* (*Nāma amani udita haya, bhakata-gīta-sāne*)."¹ This is His magnanimity, this is His mercy—that is why Śrī Gaurasundar is the giver of a greatest gift.

**The extent and character of His mercy is such that this
gift is unparalleled**

Kṛṣṇa appears personally and as His very own Name. "*Kṛṣṇastu bhagavān svayam*": Kṛṣṇa is the original Supreme Personality of Godhead. He possesses sixty-four qualities. He is the source of all incarnations, but among all His incarnations, there is no other incarnation besides Śrī Gaurasundar that would ever manifest such magnanimity. This gift of divine love is such an unprecedented and unheard event. In all other incarnations of the Lord we see that the Lord comes to destroy demons and save His devotees; but this enormous all-encompassing flood that Śrī Gaurasundar created on this earth is not seen in any other incarnation. There is magnanimity, there is mercy in other incarnations—the Lord is never cruel—but if we consider the

speciality and difference in the extent of mercy, then we must say that Śrī Gaurasundar's gift is unparalleled. Without attacking anyone, He bestows the gift of divine love unto millions of people who are filled with demoniac qualities without any reservation or solicitation. Such immense mercy is not manifest in any other incarnation. Śrī Kṛṣṇa accepts the name 'Śrī Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya' and bestows the gift of Kṛṣṇa onto everyone. He is the giver of Kṛṣṇa-prema (love for Kṛṣṇa), thus Kṛṣṇa manifests His form of 'magnanimous Kṛṣṇa'. Nothing could check the joy of Śrī Advaita Ṭhākur. The Lord bestowed the gift of divine love even to those who were unqualified and did not care for religion. "Yāre dekhe, tāre kahe 'Kṛṣṇa-upadeśa'"—whoever you see, tell them about Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, Lord Śrī Gaurasundar is the supreme worshippable Lord of all souls who have forgotten themselves, who have forgotten servitude to Lord Kṛṣṇa, who have lost their way and become ruined by Kali. We are ignorant, we are miserable—we have forgotten the Supreme Lord and we have lost our worshippable Lord. He is a friend of the destitute—not of the proud and rich. We are all people of Kali-yuga: aversion to spiritual life is filled with argument and suspicion in this age; we see all around us that everyone and everything here revolts against the spiritual. Lord Śrī Gaurasundar comes to rescue such *jīva* souls. Therefore, *jīva* souls are in a dire need of Śrī Gaurasundar, the merciful incarnation of the age of Kali. He is the father of *saṅkīrtan*—He has vested everything within His *saṅkīrtan*.

harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyatha

*"Only chanting the Holy Name, chanting the Holy Name,
chanting the Holy Name—there is no other way, no other way,
no other way."*

(*Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila, 7.76*)

The method for practising Nāma-saṅkīrtan as prescribed by Śrī Gaurasundar

It is not possible to attain divine love of Godhead in this age of Kali without *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* (chanting of the Holy Name). Meditation, mental speculation, worship (*pūjā*) or service to the Deities (*archan*) have no effect in the age of Kali, therefore except for *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* there is no other way in this age of Kali.

etāvān eva loke' smin pumśāṁ dharmāḥ paraḥ smṛtaḥ
bhakti-yogo bhagavati tan nāma-grahaṇādibhiḥ

[Lord Yamarāj to Yamadutas:] “*Devotional service, beginning with the chanting of the Holy Name of the Lord, is the ultimate religious principle for the living entity in human society.*”
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 6.3.22)

“*Bhakti-yogaḥ bhagavati, nava-lakṣaṇā bhakti / bhaktyā māma abhijānāti*” (Those who practise devotion and posses nine symptoms of devotion are very fortunate. I can be known only through devotion)—you can get the Lord only through devotion, and it does not matter which of the practices of devotion you practise—whichever it may be, you will get the Lord. Devotion to the Lord is the highest religion. The nine types of devotion hold nine kinds of power; among them, five are main; and among those five, one is the highest—this is *kīrtan* or *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*. In Kali-yuga, when one practises *kīrtan*, all other practices of devotion are also automatically practised. The gift or magnanimity of Śrī Gaurasundar is vested within *kīrtan*. Deity worship is also accompanied by *kīrtan*. If *jīva* souls take up devotional practice in the form of *kīrtan*, they will attain Lord Śrī Gaurasundar. *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* is the *jīva* soul’s service and devotional life. That is a method prescribed by Śrī Gaurasundar.

By the causeless mercy of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar, *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* is now spread all over the world. Śrī Gaura-Nitāi have

brought this *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* to our doorstep. If you consider the mercy of Śrī Gaurasundar, it will blow your mind. The more you hear about His benedictine mercy and the more you speak about it, the more you can realise how incredibly astonishing it is. Then you will understand what sort of Lord Śrī Gaurasundar is. If you say “Gaura Hari” with your tongue and if you chant His name with your heart, you will attain the highest fortune in your life by the touch of *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*.

Nitāi Ṭhākur is the Lord who gives Gaura. He would go from one ear to another and say, “Gaura Hari bol! Say ‘Gaura hari’!” When Śrī Gaurasundar heard that devotees chant “Gaura Hari bol”, He would forbid them to do it and tell them to chant the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa instead; but Nitāi Ṭhākur did not obey this—He would become intoxicated chanting “Gaura Hari bol” with devotees. In this way Lord Nitāi conquered everyone’s heart. By chanting the name ‘Gaura’ the *jīva* souls become eager to know and serve the Lord and our hearts want to spontaneously roll at the lotus feet of Gaurachāḍ. Taking His Name makes our heart dance. It is impossible to describe the type of sweetness that lies hidden within the name of Gaura Hari. This love enters and floods one’s heart by the mercy of Śrī Gaurasundar. The astounding nature of these magnanimous pastimes (*audārya-līlā*) reached its peak here, at Śrī Gambhīrā.

The Name of Gaura does not judge one’s offences

If you want to get this kind of divine love, you need to turn to the main, leading general Śrī Nitāi Ṭhākur. Without Nitāi it is impossible to get the Holy Name or divine love.

nitāiyer karuṇā habe vraje rādhā-kṛṣṇa pābe
dhara nitāiyer charaṇa duḥkhāni

“When Nitai bestows His mercy you will reach Radha-Krsna in Vraja. Grasp Nitai’s feet!”

The Holy Name of ‘Gaura Hari’ does not judge whether you are making offences or not—but the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa does. Gaura-nām (the name of Gaura), Gaura-dhām (the abode of Gaura), Gaura-parikara (the associates of Gaura) do not care for offences. As much as Śrī Gaurasundar is magnanimous, so is His abode—it is the shelter for all fallen souls. One can be greedy for money, avaricious, fallen, a low offender, dirty, but the more fallen one is, the more Nitāī Ṭhākur enters their heart. There is no parallel to the magnanimity of the abode of Śrī Gaura. The very dust in this place, the very land that bears the footprints of the Lord, etc.—this is all an abode of the Lord’s pure pastimes. If you touch this land with your head, you will get benefit; if you take the dust of this holy abode on your head, you will get perfection in a very short time. “My appearance place is very dear to Me (*janma-bhūmi priyā mama*)”—if you roll in the dust of this abode of pastimes of Śrī Gaura, you can easily get transcendental divine love. In terms of magnanimity, the abode of Śrī Gaura is the shelter for all fallen souls. Nitāī Ṭhākur eternally resides there, waiting to welcome and embrace whoever enters it.

Pastimes of Śrī Gaurasundar are eternally present

The magnanimous pastimes that Śrī Gaurasundar manifested for the sake of the *jīva* souls wasted by the age of Kali continue even now and will continue eternally. They never end.

adyāpiha sei līlā kare gaura-rāya
kona kona bhāgyavāna dekhibāre pāya

“Gaura Rāya continues performing His Pastimes, and those who are fortunate can see it.”

The more you love His abode, the more you will perceive His nectarean mercy within your heart. His holy footprints are here in this Gambhīrā, and His pastimes are still going on here. Here, every particle of dust, houses, air, etc. are singing His

incomparable glories. We have got the fortune to hear about Him today. It is impossible to describe what a great fortune it is for a *jīva* soul to get an opportunity to speak about Him.

Kṛṣṇa-nāma—sweet and sweetest

madhura-madhuram-etan maṅgalam maṅgalānām
 sakala-nigama-vallī-sat-phalam chit-svarūpam
 sakṛd api parigītam śraddhayā helayā vā
 bhṛgu-vara nara-mātram tārayet kṛṣṇa-nāma

“The chanting of the Holy Name is the most beneficial of all spiritual and pious activities. It is more relishable than the sweetest honey. It is the transcendental fruit of all the śruti scriptures, the Vedas. If any person chants this Holy Name without offences even once, be it with faith, or with derisive indifference, the Holy Name immediately offers such souls liberation.”

This Name is made of nectar. It is the transcendental fruit that has sprung from the creeper of śrutis (scriptures received through aural reception). Whether you chant this Name with faith or negligently, if you chant it even once without offences, then this Holy Name will immediately rescue you.

“Raṭanti helayā vāpi te kṛtārthā na samśaya”—even if you chant this Holy Name negligently, you will become blessed, there is no doubt about it.

tuṇḍe tāṇḍavanī ratim vitanute tuṇḍāvalī-labdhaye
 karṇa-kroḍa kaḍambini ghaṭayate karṇārbudebhyaḥ sprhām
 chetaḥ prāṅgaṇa-saṅginī vijayate sarvendriyāṇām kṛtim
 no jāne janitā kiyādbhir amṛtaih kṛṣṇeti varṇa-dvayī

“When the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa descends and captures the tongue and lips, it controls them so strongly that it engages them in chanting the Holy Name as if the lips and tongue have gone mad. In this way, the power of the name descends in them, and one feels that only one tongue and one mouth are not enough;

thousands of mouths are necessary to taste the Name. Then the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa enters the ear with such a great force and current that the ears are captured, and one thinks that only two ears are insufficient; he wants millions of ears to attend to the sweet current entering the ears. Two ears are nothing to him; he wants millions of ears. The nectar of the Holy Name is coming like a flood through his ears, pushing its way within the heart. It is so sweet that as it goes to capture the heart, the center of all senses, everything is paralysed. Wherever that sweet aggressor touches, the whole thing is captured with such intensity that everything else is ignored.

Rūpa Gosvāmī writes, 'I don't know, I can't say, I fail to express how much nectar there is in the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. These two syllables contain so much sweetness, and such a high quality of sweetness. And this sweetness is so aggressive that it captures everything.'"

(Vidagdha-Madhava, quoted from 'The Search for Sri Kṛṣṇa')

I do not know what sort of nectar this Holy Name is made of. When it dances on the tongue like a ballet dancer, you feel you want to have many tongues; when the Holy Name enters your ears, then you will want to have one hundred million ears, and when it appears in the courtyard of your heart in the form of your associate, then all your senses and activities will be defeated. It is impossible to describe how much sweetness the Holy Name contains. Your heart becomes anxious to serve the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa with all your senses. This Holy Name is eternally worshipped by liberated souls. The transcendental Holy Name ("Kṛṣṇa") personally appears on the pure tongues of liberated souls who are anxious to serve the Lord.

nikhila-śruti-mauli-ratna-mālā-
dyuti-nīrājita-pāda-paṅka-jānta!
ayi muktakulair upāsyamānam
paritas tavām harināma ! samśrayāmi

"The Crown of all the Vedas—the garland of jewels that is the Upanisads—eternally worship, by their brilliance (as an arati ceremony), the tips of the toes of Your Lotus Feet. O Holy Name, You are ever worshipped by the great liberated souls (Narada, Suka, and others, who are completely free from all mundane desires). So in every time, place and circumstance, O Name Divine, I surrender unto You."

The Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa is an embodiment of nectar. It is compared to an embellishment in the life of devotees.

jayati jayati nāmānanda-rūpam̄ murārer-
viramita-nija-dharma-dhyāna-pūjādi-yatnam̄
katham̄ api sakṛdātam̄ muktidam̄ prāṇinām̄ yat
paramamamṛtam̄ ekam̄ jīvanām̄ bhuṣaṇam̄ me

"All glories, all glories to the all-blissful holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which causes the devotee to give up all conventional religious duties, meditation and worship. When somehow or other uttered even once by a living entity, the holy name awards him liberation. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is the highest nectar. It is my very life and my only treasure."

The Holy Name is the highest, it is vested with all power

The glories of the Holy Name are incomparable. The great realised souls who live within devotional mellites relish this Holy Name of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Exclusive devotees of Kṛṣṇa chant the Holy Name (engage in *kirtan*) at every moment. Kṛṣṇa has vested all His power within His Holy Name, and there are not rules, no restrictions as to when, where, etc. one must chant or remember it. Out of mercy for the *jīva* souls, the Lord made His Holy Name extremely accessible. At the same time, it is, however, our misfortune that we do not feel any attachment for this Holy Name.

nāmnām̄ akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ

etādr̥śi tava krpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam īdṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ

“O Lord, You have manifested Your many Names, put all Your power in Them, and made no rules regarding the time for remembering Them. Such is Your great mercy. My misfortune, however, is such that I have no attachment to Your Names.”

The supremacy of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s beauty

As much as the Name of Kṛṣṇa is higher than the name of any other incarnation of the Lord, His form (beauty) is also higher than any other form. Śrī Rāmachandra is beautiful, but Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the most beautiful—His beauty makes the heart rejoice and overflow with joy. Next to His unsurpassed beauty, the beauty of other incarnations seems dull. His beauty, His form is incomparable. If you hanker to behold that beauty that entices the three worlds, you will not be able to turn your eyes away from Him anymore.

pratyākraṣṭum nayanam abalā yatra lagnam na śekuḥ
karṇāviṣṭam na sarati tato yat satām ātma-lagnam
yach-chhrīr vāchām janayati ratīm kiṁ nu mānam kavīnām
dṛṣṭvā jiṣnor yudhi ratha-gatām yach cha tat-sāmyam īyuḥ

“Once their eyes were fixed upon His transcendental form, women were unable to withdraw them, and once that form had entered the ears of the sages and become fixed in their hearts, it would never depart. What to speak of acquiring fame, the great poets who described the beauty of the Lord’s form would have their words invested with transcendently pleasing attraction. And by seeing that form on Arjuna’s chariot, all the warriors on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra attained the liberation of gaining a spiritual body similar to the Lord’s.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11.30.3)

You will admire other gods and goddesses’ beauty for as long as you have not got to see the beauty of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. When the

form of Lord Kṛṣṇa appears before your eyes or in your heart, all other forms will become dull. Even Cupid cannot attract those who have got the *darśan* of the beauty of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Even Lakṣmī Devī, the chaste, faithful wife of Lord Nārāyaṇ, wholly dedicated to her Lord's service, became attracted to Lord Kṛṣṇa in her heart when she heard the description of His beauty. Having heard the glories of Kṛṣṇa's beauty, Lakṣmī Devī's mind became unsteady. Kṛṣṇa's form has an incredible appeal. However, she does not lose her chastity thereby—she does not do any wrong, she does not transgress any rules because Kṛṣṇa and Nārāyaṇ are one personality. If a chaste woman leaves the service to her husband being drawn to the service of Kṛṣṇa, hankering to love Kṛṣṇa, there is no wrong in that. In fact, this is the highest purpose of their chastity. She is a potency of Kṛṣṇa, so if she actually loves anyone else besides Kṛṣṇa, then her chastity is lost—then it is a transgression of her chastity. The power with which Kṛṣṇa's form attracts others is indescribable. If a *jīva* soul hears the description of even just His posture, His glance, His mood, His clothes, His manners, then all other beauty becomes meaningless for them. Because He is full of love, His form is manifest in this way. Who else can possess so much love?

Meditation on Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

phullendīvara-kāntimindu-vadanaṁ barhāvataṁsa-priyam
śrī-vatsāṅkam udāra-kaustubha-dharanī pītāmbaram sundaram
gopinām nayanotpalārchita-tanum go-gopa-saṅghāvṛtaṁ
govindam kala-veṇu-vādana-paramī divyāṅga-bhūṣam bhaje

"I worship Lord Govinda, who is splendid like a blossoming blue lotus, whose face is like the moon, who is charming with a peacock-feather crown, who bears the mark of Srivatsa, who wears a great Kaustubha jewel, who is handsome in yellow garments, whose form is worshiped by the gopis' lotus eyes, who is surrounded by cows and cowherd boys, who sweetly plays the flute, and whose limbs are adorned with ornaments."

barhāpīḍa 'bhirāmam mṛgamada-tilakam kūṇḍala ākrāntā gaṇḍam
kañjākṣam kambu-kantham smita-subhaga-mukham svādhare nyasta-veṇum
śyāmam sāntam tri-bhaṅgam ravi-kara-vasanam bhūṣitam vaijayantyā,
vande vṛndāvana-stham yuvati-śata-vṛtam brahma-gopāla-veśam

"I worship that Supreme Lord whose crown is decorated with a peacock feather, whose forehead is marked with a tilak of musk, whose beautiful earrings press against His cheeks, whose eyes resemble lotus petals, whose neck's shape resembles the shape of a conchshell, who smiles gently, who holds a flute at His lips, whose bodily complexion is like that of a blackish rain-cloud, who is supremely peaceful, who stands in a three-fold bending posture, whose yellow cloth is resplendent like the rays of the sun, who is adorned with a vaijayanti flower garland, who is surrounded on all sides by thousands of gopis, and who resides in Śrī Dhām Vṛndāvan in the garb of a cowherd boy."

kasturi-tilakam lalāṭa-paṭale vakṣah-sthale kaustubham,
nāsāgre vara-mauktikam karatale veṇuh kare kañkaṇam
sarvāṅge-hari-chandanam sulalitam kañṭhe cha muktāvali,
gopa-strī-pariveṣṭito vijayate gopāla-chūḍāmaṇih

"With a musk tilak-mark decorating His forehead, a kaustubha jewel on His chest, a superb pearl on the tip of His nose, a flute in His hands, bracelets on His wrists, yellow sandalwood paste on all His body, a string of pearls around His beautiful neck, and surrounded by the wives of cowherds, this crown-jewel Gopal conquers all."

vamśi-nyastasya-chandram smita-yutam atulam pīta-vastram vareṇyam
kañjākṣam sarva-dakṣam nava-ghana-varaṇam barhā-chūḍam śaranyam
tri-bhaṅgair-bhangimāṅgam vraja-yutam dhvamsa-keśyādi-sūram
vandeśrī-nanda-sūnum madhura-rasa-tanum dhurya-mādhurya-puram

"I worship Sri Nanda-nandan, who holds a flute to His lips, who has an incomparable smile, who is dressed in beautiful yellow cloth, whose eyes are like lotus petals, who is expert in all the arts, whose bodily complexion is like that of a fresh monsoon cloud, whose head is crowned with a peacock-feather, who is the

bestower of shelter, who stands in a delightful three-fold bending posture, surrounded by the youthful maidens of Vraja, who subdues Kesi and other demons, who is the crest-jewel of infinite sweetesses, and is an excellent abode of mādhurya-rasa."

sajala-jalada-nīlam darśitodāraśīlam
karatala-dhṛtaśailam veṇu-vādye viśālām
vraja-jana-kula-pālam kāminī keli lolam
taruṇa-tulasī-mālam naumi gopāla-vālam

"I salute the child of Gopas who has a blackish complexion like that of a rain-bearing cloud, who exhibits incredible pastimes, who has held a hill in His hand, who is expert at playing the flute, who protects the residents of Śrī Dhām Vṛndāvan, who performs His alluring pastimes all over the universe, who wears a garland strung with youthful Tulasī leaves."

Such is His form and beauty. If you just once hear the glorification of Kṛṣṇa's form, if you chant and remember His form's glories, then your mind will not go to any other place. The entire universe is enchanted and overwhelmed by His beauty. Even when Kṛṣṇa-chandra Himself saw His own beauty, He became astonished. Such is the amazing characteristic of His form.

Glories of Kṛṣṇa's qualities

These are the glories of Kṛṣṇa's qualities (His qualities are also unparalleled):

sadā svarūpa-samprāptaḥ sarva-jño nitya-nūtanaḥ
sach-chid-ānanda-sāndrāṅgaḥ sarva-siddhi-niṣevitāḥ
avichintya-mahā-śaktih koṭi-brahmāṇḍa-vigrahaḥ
avatārāvalī-bijam hatāri-gati-dāyakaḥ
ātmārāma-gaṇākarsīty amī kṛṣṇe kilādbhutāḥ

"The Lord is always situated in His original position, He is omniscient, He is always fresh and youthful, He is the concentrated form of eternity, knowledge and bliss, and He is the possessor of all mystic perfection. The Lord possesses

inconceivable supreme power, He generates innumerable universes from His body, He is the original source of all incarnations, He bestows salvation upon the enemies He kills, and He has the ability to attract exalted persons who are satisfied in themselves. Although these qualities are present in Nārāyaṇa, the dominating Deity of the Vaikunṭha planets, they are even more wonderfully present in Kṛṣṇa.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛita, 2.23.79-81)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has four additional qualities that neither Śrī Rāmachandra nor Nārāyaṇ have—He excels everyone in these four qualities; that is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *aṁśī* (source of all parts) and *avatārī* (source of all *avatāras*).

sarvādbhuta-chamatkāra-līlā-kallola-vāridhiḥ
 atulya-madhura-prema-maṇḍita-priya-maṇḍalaḥ
 tri-jagan-mānasākarṣi-muralī-kala-kūjitaḥ
 asamānordhva-rūpa-śrī-vismāpita-charācharaḥ
 līlā premṇā priyādhikyaṁ mādhuryaṁ veṇu-rūpayoḥ
 ity asādharmaṇaṁ proktam̄ govindasya chatuṣṭayam
 evam̄ guṇāś chatur-bhedāś chatuh-ṣaṣṭiḥ udāhṛtāḥ

“Apart from sixty transcendental qualities, Kṛṣṇa has additional four transcendental qualities which are not manifested even in the personality of Nārāyaṇ. (1) Kṛṣṇa is like an ocean filled with waves of pastimes that evoke wonder within everyone in the three worlds. (2) In His activities of conjugal love, He is always surrounded by His dear devotees who possess unequalled love for Him. (3) He attracts the minds of all three worlds with the melodious vibration of His flute. (4) His personal beauty and opulence are beyond compare. No one is equal to Him, and no one is greater than Him. Thus the Personality of Godhead astonishes all living entities, both moving and nonmoving, within the three worlds. He is so beautiful that He is called Kṛṣṇa. Above Nārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa has four specific transcendental qualities—His wonderful pastimes, an abundance of wonderful associates who are very dear to Him [gopis, et.al.], His wonderful

beauty and the wonderful vibration of His flute. Lord Kṛṣṇa is more exalted than ordinary living beings and demigods like Lord Śiva. He is even more exalted than His personal expansion Nārāyaṇa. In all, the Supreme Personality of Godhead has sixty-four transcendental qualities in full.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛita, 2.23.84-85)

Relative characteristic of Rāma-līlā and Kṛṣṇa-līlā

He is an emporium of all *rasas*. Vajrāṅgajī (Hanumān) and Vibhiṣaṇ have love for Śrī Rāmachandra, Bali Mahārāj has love for Vāmanadev, or Prahlād Mahārāj has love for Nṛsiṁhadev, but all these feelings are somewhat sluggish. However, the love that servants and maidservants of Kṛṣṇa have for their Lord exceeds the wonderful nature of all those relationships. The love that Śridām and Suḍam feel for Kṛṣṇa exceeds the love that Vajrāṅgajī feels for his master—it is unlimitedly stronger. He is always surrounded by His dearmost devotees who possess incomparable conjugal love for Him. The separation experienced by Śrimatī Rādhikā excels the separation that Sītā Devī felt towards Her beloved. Sītā Devī cried in separation; she fainted in the *aśoka* forest, overwhelmed with the pain of separation. After she was exiled to the ashram of Valmiki in the Tapovan forest, she lamented and cried, “O Rāma!” “O Rāma!”—Valmiki became restless, “What is Rāma doing?! He has sent His innocent, chaste beloved to live in a forest!” Suffering unbearable pangs of separation, Sītā lost all her beauty—her golden form dried out. The sight of the soiled face of Sītā Devī suffering from separation from her beloved causes a deep pain. However, the Vraja *gopīs* of Vṛndāvan became mad from love for Kṛṣṇa. Sītā Devī’s pangs of separation from her Lord did not drive her crazy. All servants, all Vraja *gopīs*, Nanda Mahārāj and Mother Yaśodā—everyone went mad because of Kṛṣṇa, they lost themselves in anguish. The dust of Vṛndāvan became flooded with the tears of love. Kṛṣṇa-prema

of Śrī Rādhikā exceeds the love of Hanumān to Śrī Rāma. This is so not only in the case of conjugal relationship—such intense love for Kṛṣṇa is also seen in the devotees serving Kṛṣṇa in the relationship of neutrality, servitude, friendship and parenthood.

Acme of parenthood in Kṛṣṇa-līlā and parental love of Vasudev

Daśarath has much parental affection for Śrī Rāmachandra, but, being bound by the promise made in front of Kaikeyī, to remain truthful and righteous, he sent Lord Rāmachandra to the forest. He is truthful and righteous—he had given his word, so he must keep it. He sacrificed love for the sake of righteousness and moral code; he left love and gave moral rules a higher place. Śrī Rāmachandra is the Supreme Lord. We can make the Lord miserable, we can send Him to the forest, but we cannot forego moral principles. Then we can understand the nature of the parental love of Daśarath. Moral obligation took upper hand over love. Vasudev was also bound by a promise made in front of Kaṁsa—he promised that if he had a son, he would give him to Kaṁsa. “Do not kill Devakī now. I am giving you my word. As soon as I get a son, I will hand him over to you. I am a religious person, I never tell a lie, please believe me.” However, when Kṛṣṇa appeared in the prison of Kaṁsa, Vasudev trampled his truthfulness, moral principles, and ethical code—he carried Kṛṣṇa away and kept Him in Nandālay (house of Nanda Mahārāj). Neither the terrible storm, nor thunder, nor lightning, nor flood, nor high waves of the Yamunā could obstruct his way. Overwhelmed by the divine love for Kṛṣṇa, Vasudev kicked all moral principles, all obligation to be truthful, etc. He deceived Kaṁsa and made the Lord happy. He kept Kṛṣṇa at the house of Nanda Mahārāj and brought instead of Him a girl who was also born that day. He said, “I have not got a boy, it is a girl.” Look at this, what a sheer lie! “May Kṛṣṇa live eternally. May

my dearest Kṛṣṇa be saved from the evil hands of Kāṁsa. I break my promise unlimited number of times and go to hell, this is nothing. Daśarath could send his darling son to the forest, I cannot do it." In this way, Vasudev demolished moral principles. Whose love emerged victorious? See for yourself—there is such a big difference between Daśarath's love for Rāmachandra and Vasudev's love for Kṛṣṇa. Vasudev submitted himself to love, not to moral principles. Parental love holds so much more supremacy and excellency here. In front of a devotee's intense love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all moral rules become insignificant. Such love is not clearly manifest in any other incarnation. One day, Śrī Gaurasundar lay down to rest in the doorway in His room in Puri, because of that Govinda could not enter the room. In the end, he put his cloth on top of Mahāprabhu and crossed Him to do his service, breaking the etiquette rules. He thought, "I am going to do this service, and if I go to hell as a result, I agree." Therefore, "*Govinda kahe mane—āmāra 'sevā' se niyom.*" Govinda said to himself, 'My ultimate duty is my service.'"

Nanda Mahārāj's parental divine love

Who says that in Kṛṣṇa-lilā everything is filled with conjugal relationship? There is so much love in it. Even when Kṛṣṇa steals the clothes of the gopīs, etc.—all dealings are full of love. Kṛṣṇa of Vṛndāvan is not Devakīnandan Kṛṣṇa (son of Devakī). He is Yaśodānandan (son of Yaśodā). Vasudev could not exhibit his parental love the way Nanda Mahārāj did. Vasudev brought his son to the house of Nanda, but he could not arrange the celebration in honour of his birth. This festival was done by Nanda Mahārāj, and he did not make it as for somebody else's child. He did not know whether he had a boy or a girl that night when the child was born, so he celebrated the birth of his child as his own child's birthday. Nanda Mahārāj's parental love is much

stronger than Vasudev's. Kṛṣṇa appeared in Vasudev's room as Kṛṣṇachandra—decorated with a *vaijayantī* garland on His neck, wearing beautiful clothes, showing His four-armed form, holding a conch, a disc, a club, and a lotus, wearing alligator-shaped earrings, anklets, etc. In whose house are children born like this? Nevertheless, it did happen. Vasudev started offering praise to Kṛṣṇa when He appeared in this form, but Nanda Mahārāj never sang in His praise. His love or parental affection to Kṛṣṇa is unparalleled. Kṛṣṇa grazed cows there, walking from forest to forest, played the flute with His cowherd friends and played in so many ways. With Nanda Mahārāj, Kṛṣṇa's opulence becomes less. In terms of parental love, Nanda Mahārāj holds the highest ideal. There is no parallel to the love that Nanda-Yaśodā have for Kṛṣṇa. We worship this Nanda Mahārāj in whose house Kṛṣṇa (the Supreme Personality of Godhead!) crawls.

śrūtim apare smṛtim itare bhāratam anye bhajastu bhava-bhitāḥ
aham iha nandam vande yasyālinde param brahma

“Let others, fearing material existence, worship the Vedas, the Vedic supplementary purāṇas and the Mahābhārata, but I shall worship Nanda Mahārāj, in whose courtyard the Supreme Brahman is crawling.”

Nanda Mahārāj is a relisher of such divine mellow. The acme of *vātsalya-rasa* is found within Nanda Mahārāj. He whose single pore contains millions of universes, whom Śiva, Brahmā and others fear—He is crying and trembling when a milkmaid ties Him with a rope. In this way, He paralyses life in opulence and manifests divine love. This is the astonishing truth. He appears in this world to reveal these imperishable pastimes. If this most exalted appearance of Kṛṣṇa does not touch your heart, then your heart is made of stone. If *jīva* souls discuss and realise the exclusivity and glory of His appearance, they will attain supreme benefit in their life.

Subject: Śrī Śrī Baladev Tattva

Praying for the mercy of the holy lotus feet of our most worshippable Śrīla Guruvarga, we are going to hear transcendental topics about the holy appearance of Lord Śrī Śrī Baladev Prabhu who appears to bestow auspiciousness in this world on the holy festival day of Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *jhulan-yātrā*.

saṅkarṣaṇaḥ kāraṇa-toya-sāyī garbhoda-sāyī cha payobdhi-sāyī
śeṣaś cha yasyāṁśa-kalāḥ sa nityā-nandākhyā-rāmaḥ śaraṇām mamaśtu

“May Śrī Nityānanda Rāma be the object of my constant remembrance. Saṅkarṣaṇ, Śeṣa Nāga and the Viṣṇus who lie on the Kāraṇa Ocean, Garbha Ocean and ocean of milk are His plenary portions and the portions of His plenary portions.”
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 1.1.7)

Śrī Baladev is also called Balarām, Balabhadra and other names. Saṅkarṣaṇ, Kāraṇatoyaśayī-, Garbhodaśayī-, Payobdhiśayī- and Śeṣa-Viṣṇu are Balabhadra Prabhu's parts and particles. Śrīla Kavirāj Goswāmīpād takes shelter at the holy lotus feet of this Nityānandākhyā-Rāma and offers prayers to Him. Offering obeisance to Śrī Baladev-tattva, he praised Him in this way:

halāyudha namo stu te namas te musalāyudha
namas te revatī-kānta namas te bhakta-vatsala
balinām sreṣṭha namas te dharanī-dhara
pralambāre namo stu te trāhi mām kṛṣṇa-pūrvaja

“Obeisances to You, O holder of the plough! Obeisances to You, O wielder of the mace! Obeisances to You, O beloved of Revati!

Obeisances to You, who are very kind to Your devotees! Lord Balarama, the best of the strong and the support of the earth. Obeisances unto You, O enemy of Pralamba! Please deliver me, O elder brother of Kṛṣṇa!"

Although Śrī Baladev is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's alter ego, He is an embodiment of Kṛṣṇa's service (*sevā-vigraha*)

His Name is Halāyudha, He does not hold a conch, a disc, a club and a lotus; He holds a plough (Haladhara), a mace (Muṣaladhara). He is the killer of Pralambāsura. He is Kṛṣṇa-Jagannāth-Jagadiśa. He is both Jagannāth and Balabhadra. He resides in Śrī Kṣetra (Purī Dhām) side by side in both forms. "Keśavadhṛta-haladhara-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare": O Hari! O Keśava! O Lord of the universe! You have assumed the form of Balarām! All glory to You! Kṛṣṇa is Keśava, and Keśava is Baladev. He is the second form of Kṛṣṇa, His alter ego. He does not belong to demigods or *jīva* souls. He is *prakāśa-vigraha* and *vilāsa-vigraha* of Kṛṣṇa (He embodies Kṛṣṇa and His pleasure pastimes). And there is also one amusing thing—He is *sevā-vigraha* (embodiment of service to His Lord), but He also does His own service. He is an object of service and a servant, that is the object of service and a servant are one personality—just as you can be massaging your own head. Although He is the alter ego of Kṛṣṇa (He is His non-different form), He also assumes the form of *sevā-vigraha* of Kṛṣṇa (embodiment of service to Kṛṣṇa). Such are the amazing pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa Himself assumes another form. To nourish His pastimes, He extends Himself into a separate form of Baladev. Therefore, Baladev is non-different from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa enjoys through this extension of His body. He is also *sevā-vigraha* of Lord Kṛṣṇa—He renders the highest service.

In the age of Dvāpara, He appears as Baladev in Kṛṣṇa-līlā, and in the age of Tretā, He appears as Lakṣmāṇ in Śrī Rāma-

līlā. When Śrī Rāmachandra appeared in Tretā-yuga, Lakṣmāṇ also came as His younger brother. Lakṣmāṇ is the alter ego of Lord Śrī Rāmachandra, and, just like Baladev Prabhu, He is not a *jīva* soul (a particle of the Lord), He comes from Viṣṇu (He is an expansion of the Lord). Both Baladev and Lakṣmāṇ are *sevā-vigrahas* (embodiments of service, i.e. servants). Lakṣmāṇ is an embodiment of servitude to Śrī Rāmachandra—a younger brother who dedicates His life to the service of His elder brother. However, when He wanted to serve Śrī Rāmachandra, sometimes His service was obstructed, therefore His service did not manifest fully. Actually, the object of the service gets the result of the service—the purpose of service is to bring happiness to the object of service and to satisfy the senses of the object of service. If a servant cannot do his service, he feels deep pain in his mind. Because the servant's serving propensity is not completely satisfied, he feels discontent in his heart. He wants to please the Lord with all his being—with his actions, mind, and speech—but he cannot do it, then he faces a great difficulty. So, here Lakṣmāṇ is younger, and a younger brother has to always follow the order of his elder brother—according to the moral rules, a younger brother cannot disobey his elder brother's order.

**Rāma-līlā's main purpose is to follow moral behaviour,
to preserve moral behaviour, to protect the truth
and to satisfy the dependents**

Some of the purposes of Rāma-līlā are to follow impeccable moral behaviour and to preserve moral rules and obligations. The Lord's moral obligation is to be truthful and protect His subjects. He can never violate the righteous rules of conduct. For the sake of following the ethical principles and morality properly, the secret purpose of Rāma-līlā is to set an example of these moral principles. Wherever Śrī Rāmachandra performed His pastimes—be it in

Ayodhya, in Lanka, Dandakaranya or when slaying demoness Tadaka—He never broke the moral etiquette. He descended to this world to establish the necessity to follow moral rules—it is necessary to follow them for the benefit of the *jīva* souls. To nourish these pastimes, Lakṣmāṇ also had to yield to the moral principles. In this way, even if there were obstacles or obstructions in His service, even if He was dissatisfied with His service, to carry out the main moral obligations, He too had to follow severe rules and regulations otherwise the pastimes of Lord Śrī Rāmachandra would not be complete and satisfactory. If Lakṣmāṇ had acted in another way, He would not be able to serve his Lord. Trying to carry out the order of Śrī Rāmachandra, Lakṣmāṇ had to cross His own heart. He had to do many things against His wish. If the younger brother does not obey whatever order his elder brother gives him, then morality is not maintained—it could be beautiful, it could show more love, but it did not support morality. Rāma-lilā's purpose is not to increase love—even when Lakṣmāṇ saw that His love for the Lord was obstructed at the time when He was doing His service, He still gave priority to morality. Sītā Devī is innocent, her character is faultless and unblemished, but still, to satisfy His subjects, Śrī Rāmachandra abandoned her and sent her to the forest, and it was Lakṣmāṇ's duty to take her to the forest and leave her there. In terms of love, this separation or sacrifice was wrong; in terms of love, there is no justification of such action; but in terms of morality, it was the right thing to do because Rāmachandra is the king—His subjects look up to Him and would squint at Him or take up a wrong path; this could not be allowed. Disregarding His love, Śrī Rāmachandra had to give up Sītā Devī to maintain His righteousness, although He knew she was innocent. Neither did Sītā Devī show any revolt. She could have said to Śrī Rāmachandra, "You have already made me step into fire to test my purity and have got the proof of it, why must I now live in the forest?" But she did not say it.

Sītā Devī knew it all, Lakṣmāṇ also knew it, and Śrī Rāmachandra knew it better than anyone else. Still, even knowing everything, He sent her to live in the forest. He came to perform particular pastimes, so from this standpoint it was right. Lakṣmāṇ served Rāmachandra shedding His blood. When the time came to appoint Rāmachandra the king, Kaikeyī decided that she wanted Him to live in the forest for fourteen years. Daśarath could not say ‘no’ because then his morality, or promise, would be broken. Sītā Devī also went to live in the forest with Rāmachandra, but Kaikeyī never wanted Lakṣmāṇ to go with them too—Lakṣmāṇ went with Rāmachandra voluntarily, to serve His worshippable Lord. The fact that Rāmachandra and Sītā Devī had to go to live in the forest pierced Lakṣmāṇ’s heart like an arrow, and the greatest pain was in the heart of Daśarath. Not being able to tolerate this terrible pain, Daśarath left his body, but he did not leave his adherence to morality. Rāmachandra rejected His throne, but He did cross His father’s word.

Sometimes, morality disrupts one’s service life. Morality belongs to a much lower plane. What is the value of ethical principles or morality when there is love? Where there is loving service, moral principles have no value. Why did then Sītā Devī have to go to the forest following the order of Rāma? She had to do it to show support to ethical principles. Rāmachandra called His younger brother and said, “You know why I have appeared, so You must take Sītā Devī to the forest.” This extremely difficult order of His elder brother broke Lakṣmāṇ’s heart. A flood of tears fell from His eyes. Still, He carried out His elder brother’s order—He took Sītā Devī to Tapovan, the āśram of Vālmīki. Lakṣmāṇ did not go against His brother’s righteousness, but He could not forget the pain that He felt at that time.

The younger brother Lakṣmān in Tretā becomes the elder brother Baladev in Dvāpara

"When You become Kṛṣṇa in the age of Dvāpara, I will also come. O Lord! But this time I am not going to be Your younger brother. I will become Your elder brother. It is too difficult to be a younger brother—I became Your younger brother in Tretā and could not disobey Your moral rules. You have given me so much pain, it is OK, I do not care about it, but You made me follow Your order and do so much wrong to Sītā Devī! This time You will have to listen to Me, You will have to do what I tell You!" Therefore, in Dvāpara, Lakṣmān comes as an elder brother. Vraja-vāsīs affectionately call Him 'Dāujī' ('elder brother'). This time, He is everyone's elder brother, and the younger brother has to follow His elder brother.

Three Lords ride in chariots—Jagannāth, Baladev and Subhadrā; but Balarām says, "I will go first, You two wait." What kind of service is this? Why must the servant go first and why must the master go behind him? "Because if there are any thorns on the way, if any danger comes in the way, I will take care of it." That is why Baladev always goes first at Ratha-yātrā time. In this way, Balarām becomes elder and gives orders to Kṛṣṇa. "I will go before You. Whether You like it or not, You have to obey Me." What order He gives, its purpose is to make Kṛṣṇa's happy—not to establish His mastery over Him. When Kṛṣṇa later kidnaps Rukmiṇī, then Baladev came forward and said, "You take her, I will stay and take care of everything." Then the fighting began. When there is a wedding procession they usually blow clarinets, but this time there were sounds of trumpeters. Baladev stopped the fighting. Another time, Kāṁsa called Kṛṣṇa to join a wrestling tournament. Who can stop Balāī? Baladev said, "Whether Kāṁsa likes it or not, I will come too." Balāī removed all obstacles (thorns) on the way when Kṛṣṇa set off to

kill Kamsa. He is within every service—being an embodiment of service, He nourishes the pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Baladev plays His horn so that Kṛṣṇa can play His flute of divine love smoothly

Kṛṣṇa plays the flute and goes to the forest with cows and calves. Mother Yaśodā knows no end of worry—who knows, sometimes a demon can come to the forest and create disturbance. Then Balāi steps forward and comforts Mother Yaśodā, “Mother, you do not need to worry. I am with Him, then what is there to be afraid of?” Mother Yaśodā says, “When You go with Him, then I do not worry.” Then, Kānai and Balāi go to the forest with other cowherds. When His horn sounds, there is no sweetness in it. Hearing the sound of Balāi’s horn, everything inauspicious becomes panic-stricken. His horn announces, “Hey, whoever and whatever is there, be careful! If you are naughty, you are done! Demons, beware! If you make problems, you will not escape death!” Balāi is not soft like butter—He is heroic (“*balinām śreṣṭha*”—He is extremely powerful). Balāi looks after Kṛṣṇa and makes sure He is always happy, makes sure that no obstruction comes in Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes—so that Kṛṣṇa’s flute can play properly, freely. Even during Kṛṣṇa’s *śṛṅga-līlā* (conjugal pastimes), Balarām secretly removes all obstacles. Like a gatekeeper, He stands at the gate with His horn and plough. Kṛṣṇa has taken up the flute so that sweetness could resound and play everywhere; and when Kṛṣṇa plays the flute, Balāi plays the kettle-drum so that Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes and mellow would not be disturbed in any way. That is why He is heroic, He is Haladhara and Muṣaladhara (holder of a plough and a club). If I am there, then nothing will obstruct Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. That is why Baladev Prabhu is *sevā-vigraha*—He is an embodiment of service, an ideal servitor. Although He is Kṛṣṇa’s elder brother, He nourishes Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes.

He is Lakṣmān in Tretā, Baladev in Dvāpara, and in Kali
He is Nityānanda

He is Lakṣmān in Tretā, He is Baladev in Dvāpara, and in the age of Kali He is Nitāi. Krṣṇa comes to this earth assuming the form of Gaura, an embodiment of magnanimity and mercy. Krṣṇa performs His magnanimous pastimes as Śrī Gaurasundar in order to rescue all the souls drowning in sins, suffering and offences. At that time Balāi could not keep quiet—"If You are coming, then I must come too!" Balāi now becomes Nitāi. This time too He is not a younger brother—He comes as an elder brother.

“vrajendra-nandana yei, śāchīśūta haila sei,
balarāma haila nitāi”

"The son of the King of Vraja has now become a son of Śachi, and Balarām has become Nitāi."

The son of the King of Vraja has become Śāchī-nandan (son of Mother Śāchī); in the meantime, Rohinī-nandan (son of Rohinī) has become Padmāvatī-nandan (son of Padmāvatī). This time Nitāi Ṭhākur comes much earlier—and He performs many pastimes. When it came to these pastimes of rescuing the *jīva* souls, He did not stay behind. Although He appeared much earlier, He remained quiet waiting until Śrī Gaurasundar revealed Himself. Although He appeared before Śrī Gaurasundar, He did not reveal Himself. He travelled to various holy places in the garb of a *parivrājaka* (mendicant). Such was His disguised pastimes. However, when the sounds of *mṛdaigas* arose in the house of Śrīvas Paṇḍit in Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām and *kīrtan* began, then Nityānanda Prabhu left His pilgrimage and at once ran to Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām. It is necessary to ensure that the pastimes of the Lord where He distributes divine love and the Holy Name flow unobstructed. This time, it is necessary to bestow the gift of

divine love for the Holy Name (*Nāma-prema*) and rescue all souls submerged in sins, suffering, material life, all the fallen and low souls. Whenever the Lord falls behind this duty, His elder brother Nitāi steps forward—not to overstep Śrī Gaurasundar, but to back Him, to reveal and enhance His glory. Wherever there are drunkards, debauchees, sinners and inauspicious people, Nitāi Ṭhākur runs there first. In Gaura-lilā both Śrī Gaurasundar and Nityānanda Prabhu are incarnations of mercy and compassion. In these pastimes They never take up weapons. However, when once blood fell from the forehead of Nitāi Ṭhākur in Nabadwīp, then Śrī Gaurasundar forgot Himself and summoned Sudarśan Chakra. He cried, “Behead them!!” Then Nitāi Ṭhākur stood in His way and said, “O Lord! Have You come to wield *chakra* here this time? Have You come to show how heroic You are and how good You are at slaying others?” Saying this, He stopped the *chakra*. Who except for the elder brother can stop Śrī Gaurasundar’s *chakra*? When Śrī Gaurasundar took *sannyās*, He set off to Nīlāchal (Śrī Puri Dhām)—on the way, Nitāi Ṭhākur broke His *daṇḍa* into three parts. “My Master must carry a *daṇḍa*? No way. You must listen to what I say!” When Gaurasundar asked for His *daṇḍa*, Nitāi Ṭhākur came to Him and said, “I have broken Your *daṇḍa*. You can punish Me as You please.” Śrī Gaurasundar said, “I am a *sannyāsī*, people will laugh seeing Me without a *daṇḍa*, they will mock Me! Do you want to entertain everyone?” Nitāi Ṭhākur said, “I have listened to You a lot, I have followed You enough! Even if people laugh, they will laugh at Me—they will say why did I break Your *daṇḍa*. Your character is unblemished, You are a staunch renunciate, therefore You follow *sannyās-dharma* flawlessly. Nobody will mock You.” Who can break Gaurasundar’s *daṇḍa*? Because Nitāi is His ‘elder brother’, He could do it.

**Both Lakṣmāṇ and Baladev are ideal servitors, but the
acme of service manifests in Baladev**

Lakṣmāṇ, Baladev and Nitāi are one and the same. Śrī Rāmachandra is not an emporium of all rasas, He is not Bahu-jana-vallabha (a satisfier of many people)—He has only one wife and He is self-righteous. There is no paramour love in His pastimes, there is no *rāsa-līlā*. Such pastimes do not exist in the pastimes of Vāmana, Nr̄siṁha and Varāha. Kṛṣṇa is Śrī Rāmachandra, and Baladev is Lakṣmāṇ. Baladev and Lakṣmāṇ are both *sevā-vigraha* (ideal servitors, embodiment of service); but the lustre, the glory of Balarām’s service is much stronger compared to that of Lakṣmāṇ. This is not a question of being biased. If we consider Their loving service mood in an unbiased way, then we must say that there is no comparison between Them. Kṛṣṇa is *rasamaya* (full of devotional mélots) and *rasika-śekhara* (supreme enjoyer of devotional mélots). In this sense, Kṛṣṇa cannot be compared to Śrī Rāmachandra. Kṛṣṇa is an emporium of all *rasas* (devotional mélots), and in Kṛṣṇa-līlā Lakṣmāṇ’s service mood reaches its acme in Baladev Prabhu. In Kali-yuga also, Kṛṣṇa and Gaura are one and the same. Kṛṣṇa appears in His magnanimous pastimes as Gaura, and in His pastimes of sweetness, Gaura appears as Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Sweet Gaurāṅga is Kṛṣṇa, and magnanimous Kṛṣṇa is Gaura. Both Balarām and Nityānanda embody the ideal of service in *mādhurya-līlā* of Kṛṣṇa and *audārya-līlā* of Gaurāṅga, respectively. When Nitāi Thākur appears, He supports and nourishes the *audārya-līlā* of Gurasundar. He accepts the role of the chief general preacher of Gurasundar’s Name, love, preaching and pastimes. His extreme mercy is enchanting for the entire world.

The current of Baladev and Nityānanda flows eternally in the form of Śrī Guru

Lakṣmāṇ’s pastimes took place in Tretā-yuga, Baladev Prabhu’s pastimes in Dvāpara-yuga, and Nitāi Ṭhākur’s pastimes in Kali-yuga. This is all past history. Nitāi Ṭhākur appeared in Kali-yuga five hundred years ago. So, this is all past events, historical facts. How are Śrī Baladev Prabhu’s pastimes happening now? Lakṣmāṇ does not disappear—He comes as Balarām. Balarām does not disappear either—He comes as Nitāi. Nitāi also does not disappear—He comes as the guru. Balāī’s pastimes are still going on, but they do not look the same as they did (in Dvāpar-yuga)—as much as Balāī’s and Nitāi’s posture is not the same. Therefore, Baladev Prabhu’s pastimes of appearance never ends, it occurs even now—in an inseparable and uninterrupted way.

“adyāpiha sei līlā kare gaura-rāya
kona kona bhāgyavāna dekhibāre pāya”

“Gaura Rāy continues performing His Pastimes, and those who are fortunate can see it.”

How is Nitāi Ṭhākur’s appearance happening now? Nitāi Ṭhākur appears in the form of a guru. Gurudev is non-different from Nityānanda. Gurudev appears with the power of Nitāi Ṭhākur eternally. Baladev Prabhu does not appear now, Nitāi Ṭhākur is also not manifest, so Their pastimes have stopped—this is not true. Gurudev comes in the form of Baladev, in the form of Nityānanda and brings the souls who have taken shelter in him to Gaurasundar. Their appearance pastimes are happening eternally—They eternally appear in the form of the guru. The Lord manifests this eternal pastime in the hearts of surrendered *jīva* souls and His disciples. Not everybody can taste this eternal pastime. Just as not everyone can see Rāma-līlā, Kṛṣṇa-līlā, the same is true about Gurudev and Nityānanda—today too, not

everybody can realise this pastime. Non-different from Baladev, Gurudev's play of manifesting his power is continuing even now and will continue eternally. This current will never be stopped. This is the transcendental truth.

**guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana sāstrera pramāṇe
guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karen bhakta-gaṇe**

“According to the precepts of the scriptures, the guru is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa comes in the form of the guru and bestows His mercy upon His devotees.”

**nitāiyer karuṇā habe vraje rādhā-kṛṣṇa pābe
dhara nitaiyer-charaṇa duḥkhāni**

“When Nitāi bestows His mercy you will reach Radha-Kṛṣṇa in Vraja. Grasp Nitāi’s feet!”

This current flows eternally through a genuine Śrī Guru. Gurudev is an embodiment of service (*sevā-vigraha*). Will the Supreme Lord’s service ever diminish or be stopped? No. His service will always continue. Who will continue this service? This service is manifest by the Lord’s *sevā-vigraha*, Śrī Gurudev. He awakens service consciousness in the hearts of *jīva* souls. If there is no guru, there is also no servitor—then who will do the service? Service is eternal, the servitor is also eternal. Śrī Gurudev serves the Lord at every moment.

**sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair
uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhīḥ
kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya
vande guroḥ śrī-charaṇāravindam**

“I offer my obeisance unto the lotus feet of Sri Guru, who is said by all the scriptures to be the Lord Himself, and considered to be so by the sādhus, yet is also the Lord’s beloved devotee.”

(Śrī Śrī Guravaṣṭakam, 7)

**Gurudev is the dearmost of the Lord and holder of
Nityānanda's power, Gurudev is an embodiment of
Kṛṣṇa's service**

Śrī Gurudev is *Bhagavat-presthā*—the dearmost associate of the Lord. The worshippable object of service manifests within him. Therefore, Gurudev's appearance is Nityānanda Prabhu's appearance, and at the same time that of Baladev. The power of Nityānanda Prabhu manifests within Gurudev and eternally continues service line. If you call somebody Gurudev, but that person does not have connection with Nityānanda, i.e. if he does not have the power of Baladev vested in him, then where will his quality and power of guru come from? How can you call him a guru then? If there is no power of guru, you may take a mantra, you may take initiation there, but the power of Nityānanda Prabhu will not appear. If the power of Baladev does not awaken, then there is no power of guru there. If one is a genuine proper guru, then the power of Nityānanda manifests in him. This is not some poetical imagination or just some lecture. This is a spiritual truth. Baladev's appearance is eternal; Gurudev's appearance is also eternal. This appearance is a matter that exclusive disciples (who have exclusive adherence to their guru) realise in their hearts, it also reveals Kṛṣṇa. Gurudev is inseparable from the appearance of Nityānanda. Nitāi Ṭhākur is the Lord who gives Gaura. Because He exists *jīva* souls can get service to the Lord. Kṛṣṇa always keeps His close associates manifest in this world to protect devotional line (*bhakti-yoga*) and to spread the exalted glory of His service. Gurudev is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa and a manifestation of service to Kṛṣṇa. This is the intrinsic nature of Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise, if there is no guru, how will His service run? Because Gurudev appears eternally, *jīva* souls are able to attain perfection and there remains a possibility for them to get free from the bondage of the transcendental illusory potency.

Non-different from Baladev, Gurudev can rescue jīva souls from the clutches of Māyā

Non-different from Baladev, Gurudev destroys the cruel tyranny of Māyā (illusory environment) in his disciples. Disciples often cannot understand this, so sometimes, he tells them about it out of mercy, then some fortunate disciples can understand it, and some still cannot. Just as a baby kicks his mother not being able to understand how much good she does for him, or passes urines on her lap, but the mother tolerates everything out of deep affection for the baby. Gurudev is also full of love and affection, he takes care of his disciples as a mother. Māyā has no power to stand against Gurudev.

ihāre (māyāre) kariyā jaya chhāḍāna nā yāya
sādhu-guru kṛpā vinā āra nāhika upāya

"It is not possible to conquer maya by engaging in māyā. There is no other way to get relief except for the mercy of sadhus."

It is impossible to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness without the mercy of and service to the holy lotus feet of Gurudev

When Gurudev bestows his mercy on somebody, illusory environment cannot obstruct them any more. If Śrī Gurupādpadma wishes, he can rescue the *jīva* soul. No matter how much sin, how many offences and bad elements one may have, Gurudev can destroy everything with his causeless mercy. If someone sincerely accepts this devotional line, then no matter how many faults, sins and offences they may still have—he forgives everything. Forgiveness comes with mercy, compassion. When someone has some fault or offence, they are forgiven; after forgiveness, they are given mercy. If Nitāi Ṭhākur was not forgiving, then nobody could ever be rescued. Who does Nitāi forgive? Not such enemies like Rāvaṇa, Kaṁsa and Śiśupāl—

Gurudev forgives the *jīva* souls who are weak, repentant, miserable but want to practise devotion. Gurudev is merciful to the destitute, therefore if such destitute souls are not forgiven, they have no hope. Disciples try very hard to progress on the path of devotion, but they cannot. They cannot tolerate the urges that come from previous lifetimes. Gurudev certainly forgives such disciples and bestows his mercy on them. When one has ill motives or spiteful mind, there is no forgiveness shown for them. Non-different from Baladev and Nityānanda, Gurudev is very hard on the surface but soft as a lotus inside. Rāvana, Kaṁsa, Jarāsandha and others—those who are traitors—cannot understand such mercy of Śrī Gurupādpadma. However, without the mercy of Śrī Gurupādpadma, there is no hope for the *jīva* soul. Those who do not get the *darśan* of the power of Śrī Guru within their Gurudev, are cheated. Those who do not respect or obey their Guru are cheaters, their life is useless. If you do not give proper respect and do not obey him in whose heart Nityānanda Prabhu resides, if you treat them with contempt, then this is your great misfortune. If you have no love, no affection for your Gurudev, if you do not serve him, obey him, accept him and if you hold grudge or malice against him, then you can never practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Those who do not have such obstacles or ill feelings can never fall down or slip up—they can never be swayed from the path of devotion.



Ultimate goal of life is service to God

Praying for the mercy of the worshippable holy lotus feet of Śrī Śrīla Guru-varga, we are going to hear some teaching of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* on the occasion of the annual *Śrī Hari-smarāṇ* festival.

neha yat karma dharmāya na virāgāya kalpate
na tīrtha-pada-sevāyai jīvann api mṛto hi saḥ

“Anyone whose work is not meant to elevate him to religious life, anyone whose religious ritualistic performances do not raise him to renunciation, and anyone situated in renunciation that does not lead him to devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, must be considered dead, although he is breathing.”

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 3.23.56)

Religion in the execution of duties and public welfare works

All of us perform some action (*karma*) to some extent. When we do something, we usually do it for our own self, i.e. we do something and consider that we have the right to enjoy the result of our endeavours. When you engage in fruitive activities (*karma*), the result is one—you become a master of *karma* (*karma-kortā*). Many do something according to their capacity, diligence, etc. and take all the result they get for their own enjoyment. This is selfish karma. There is nothing plausible in that. However, if somebody does something and gives some result of their actions to somebody

else, then it is good—many live like this. However, there are many who do not enjoy the result of their actions, instead they use it to give pleasure to their family (father, mother, son, daughter, wife, husband, relative, etc.), so they practise some renunciation. Working for the sake of the family's interest is a little better than working merely for your own interest. Such karma is also called a religion (*dharma*). The religion of householders is the religion of executing your duty. However, this is a type of selfishness. Some go beyond that and extend the earned result of their actions beyond their family—they help their neighbours, compatriots, or other living souls of this world; they engage in charity. By the sweat of their brow they get the result of their assiduous actions but instead of taking it for themselves, some people prefer to refuse from it and give it to others. Altruism, charity or social service are religions. Actions performed for others' benefit are considered religion. Unless one works for the sake of religion, no matter how highly qualified the person may be, there is nothing plausible in his or her actions. The result of karma is suicide, it is selfishness, and there is no religion in it. If one does something for the sake of religion, then there is something plausible in that. What is religion then? If one gives the result of their actions to others, then it is religion. When one lives only to eat themselves and satisfy their own needs, such base selfishness can never be praised. Do not eat everything yourself. Religion starts when you divide your earned wealth among family, neighbours, villagers, compatriots or all living entities of this world. This is religion in the form of Social duties or humanitarian service.

Religion filled with attachment inevitably leads to bondage

However, such dutifulness and altruism is not practiced by renounced people, therefore there is not much praiseworthy

in such life. If I consider myself the master of my own actions and work without giving up attachment, then even if I work for others' benefit (for the sake of *jīva* souls, compatriots, etc.), it will not arouse any auspiciousness or spiritual benefit—it will bring bondage. "I provide for my parents, children, relatives, etc."—if such ego and vanity come to me as a result of my actions, then execution of such duties will only bring *karma* (material consequence) and bondage. Unless we practise religion without attachment, the result of our practise will not be very auspicious. Suppose I give somebody a gift—if giving this gift brings ego and pride to my mind, then it will inevitably cause bondage. *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* speaks about working without attachment. If your religion does not culminate in renunciation, then "*alam na śobhate*"—auspiciousness or peace will never come. Actions performed without attachment are called "*niṣkāma karma*." Such detachment is not utopian—it is possible for a *jīva* soul to perform all actions and remain detached. However, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* speaks about even a higher conception. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* does not teach that performing actions with detachment is the best or the highest conception. If your detached actions do not culminate in the service to 'Tīrthapād', then such life is not considered praiseworthy. If one serves the Lord with attachment and passion for Tīrthapād, then everything becomes beautiful.

**naiṣkarmyam apy achyuta-bhāva-varjitam
na śobhate jñānam alam nirañjanam**

"Knowledge of self-realisation, even though free from all material affinity, does not look good if devoid of a conception of the Infallible Lord."

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 1.5.12)

Tīrthapād means Viṣṇu or Bhagavān (the Supreme Lord whose lotus feet are a place of pilgrimage). Unless one performs actions for the service of the Lord, then it cannot be called the

highest. We all perform some actions, be it for our family or for the country, and we are satisfied with that, but can there be any other purpose in life? *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* drums this ideology and conception—this is what *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* teaches about.

**Action performed for others' welfare reaches
the temporary plane of body and mind, therefore
it is incapable of giving the highest result**

The highest achievement in the life of a *jīva* soul is the highest good and it is not attained through the practice of religion, be it religion for the sake of material gain or religion practised without material attachment. Generally, we are not used to hearing such things. This conception is revolutionary. Speaking about the teachings of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, even if you give some temporary help to the *jīva* souls through your selfless work, why will it not give you supreme benefit? This is what we are discussing now. Service to the country, service to the society, service to the *jīva* souls, service to one's mother or motherland, etc.—these are all different ways of helping others. We are used to working, to doing something, that is why we say that all these things are good. However, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* says that even if you render all these services properly, *jīva* souls will not get supreme benefit through that. For example, I opened a food distribution centre for the famine-stricken people, I dug a water reservoir to give people access to water, and I have opened a hospital. A lot of people can be helped by that, or I used all my time, money and qualification to open a school, college, university, debating club, library, etc. This is no doubt noble or religious. However, on what plane do the *jīva* souls receive the benefit I am giving (when I dig a water reservoir, build a hospital or feed the famine-stricken, etc.)? Where does this help take them? All this help is bodily help. Only the body of the *jīva* soul receives this help. If

there is a water reservoir, I can drink nice water, my health will be good. If there is a hospital, then illnesses will be cured and it will prevent people from suffering. This is right, but where does that take you? Famine-stricken people suffer because of a lack of food, but where is their hunger? In their bodies. I open a university or a school, college—through that many ignorant and foolish people can become literate and educated, they can be enlightened in many subjects, but on what plane do they accept this knowledge? On the plane of mind. This encourages mental or intellectual culture, development of the mind and vigour of brain.

Analysis of the twenty-four elements

We must think about it—what does ‘man’ mean? His body, mind, intelligence and ego? But is ‘man’ anyone’s name? When Kapila, the author of *Sāmkhya-darśan*, was going to discuss the *jīva-tattva* (the nature of the *jīva* soul), he analysed twenty-four elements. Earth, water, fire, air, and ether are the five gross elements. Objects of hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, and smelling are the five sense objects. Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin are the five senses for obtaining knowledge. Speech, hands, feet, anus, and genitals are the five organs of action. Above these there is mind, above mind there is intelligence, and above intelligence is ego, and the last one is *maha-tattva* (the first covering of the *jīva* soul that later transforms into the ego). All these together comprise the twenty-four elements. Analysis of the *jīva-tattva* made by Kapila is very scientific, but even if you analyse each of these elements separately or put them together, it will not comprise one whole *jīva* soul. If you separately consider the earth, water, fire, air and ether—or, in modern language, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and other elements, atoms and molecules—the five gross material elements, the five senses for obtaining knowledge, the five organs of action, as well as mind,

intelligence, ego, etc., you can get to see some part of the soul, but not even a whole part of it. However, if you put all these elements together, will you get one whole man? You will not, neither is it possible. To understand this, it is not necessary to raise so many logical or philosophical questions. The twenty elements are gross, and although mind, intelligence and ego are subtle, they are nonetheless material. For example, you can touch or feel earth, water, fire, air, ether, with your organs of senses (hands, legs, etc.), but you cannot really touch your mind, but even then these elements are material. Scientists make experiments with them in a laboratory. Yet, if you put all these material things together, you will not get a man or a *jīva* soul from that. There is one more thing behind it—the thing that activates all these gross material or subtle material (body, mind, intelligence, ego, etc.); the thing that makes the hand move, the tongue speak, the thing that enables the mind to desire and think and the intelligence to judge what is true and what is untrue, and that makes us experience feelings; the thing owing to which everything functions—if we create our store of knowledge omitting this very thing, it will be extremely partial. Therefore, this thing should be taken into consideration. When I help the body (my eyes, lungs, intelligence, etc.), such help is related with me—even though for a very short time, but I have a relationship with these elements. However, helping these elements, knowing about the relationship with these elements or extending of the power of these elements is not altogether useless, but there is no question of the *jīva* soul being complete if we consider only that. Actually, the nature (religion) of the body is such that it is perishable—no matter how much effort you make, this body will not live for more than 25-100 years. The mind may accept or reject something, the intelligence may judge something, or I may think, "I am Bengali," "I am a man," "I am a *brāhmaṇ*," "I am a

human," etc., but these things are not eternal. I think now that I am Bengali, but when I leave this body, I can go somewhere else and be born in America or Russia. "I am a woman," "I am a man", "I am a demigod," "I am a *gandharva*"—whatever perception I can have about myself, it is not eternal. No matter how much I do for this body, mind, intelligence or ego, it will be always temporary, perishable. I have only a temporary relationship with these things. Therefore, no matter how much I try to practise or cultivate myself through the support of all these material elements, no matter how much I try to study them, they are still all products of material nature, their function is not eternal. So, if we always focus our knowledge, intelligence, qualifications, labour, etc. on these twenty-four aspects, then our knowledge will not last forever. This body has a relation with the mind, and it has a certain condition even when the subtle body or the gross body is cast off. I can be a great scientist, philosopher or a poet, but when my subtle and gross body falls dead, then all this intelligence will be destroyed. Therefore, no matter how much you try to help your mind and intelligence, the result of your help will not stay for many days. However, there is one more thing there—that is soul, or *ātma*. The *jīvātmā* (the *jīva* soul) is not this temporary body or mind—it is a separated expansion of the Lord, filed with eternal, cognisant and blissful existence. It is eternal, it is never born and never dies. The practice focused on the help or welfare of this *jīvātmā* is the highest religion. The Lord is pleased with the practice of this religion.

The soul is self-illuminating and real reality

That which is not destroyed when the mind and intelligence are destroyed is called transcendental (*chinmaya*). Transcendental is not material, it is not matter. It supersedes material nature. The three modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance cannot touch

it. Because the soul is there, this body, mind, intelligence and ego function and remain active. The soul is conscious, this is not some imagination, it is extremely real and positive. When we do something for others' welfare, it reaches the plane of body, mind, intelligence and ego, but why cannot we accept the existence of the soul—the conscious element behind all the material elements, that cannot be seen, heard, touched or seen with a telescope? You can see thousands of mile away with a telescope, but you cannot see the soul with it; you can hear the sound coming from thousands of miles away, but you cannot hear the soul with its help—because we cannot perceive the soul with our senses, we say that it does not exist, and if so, then the question is over. But the soul is self-illuminating, we cannot say that it does not exist. The soul does exist within every living being—it does not matter whether you are a sceptic, an agnostic, an atheist, or anyone else. It is impossible to reject its existence.

There is a great difference between the *jīvātmā* and God. God is not a *jīva* soul, He is the master of Māyā (His illusory potency), the creator of all living entities. *Jīva* souls are subject to Māyā.

“māyādhīśa’māyā-vaśa’—īśvare-jīve bheda”

“God is the master of the potencies, and the living entity is the servant of them. That is the difference between God and the living entity.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.6.162)

Difference between God and the soul; God is transcendental, beyond material perception, He is not subject to material senses

No matter how great a *jīva* soul may be—it can be a great poet a scientist, a king or a president of a state—but it is still a *jīva*, not God (Bhagavān). You cannot compare a frog with the sky. If a frog puffs up more and more, it will end up exploding

to smithereens—it cannot become the sky; in the same way, a *jīva* soul can be great in all respects, but it can never be the Supreme Lord (Bhagavān). A *jīva* soul is an infinitesimal particle of consciousness, and God is infinitely potent. He is an eternal, full of bliss and cognisance entity that is endowed with full consciousness. Because we cannot see Him, He does not exist—there is no need in Him, just leave Him out. If we cannot see Him with the help of our senses, why must we reject His existence? This is not intelligent. He *is*—we cannot reject His existence just because we cannot see Him with our material senses. He is beyond material perception (*adhokṣaja*)—He is incomprehensible through the knowledge measured by our senses ("*akṣaja-jñāna*") or direct material experience. We can see a product of material nature with our material eyes, but if you want to see something non-material (i.e. transcendental) with your senses (grasp it within your material intelligence), then your conception cannot be appreciated. The existence of God is eternal and real, it is not illusory. Because you cannot perceive this reality, you think that He does not exist or you just disregard Him altogether—it cannot be like this. If a peasant cannot understand the gravitation theory of Newton or if the realisation of this theory does not come to him, then this theory is a lie—never mind it. This is wrong, it cannot be so—as much as it is not acceptable to think that if you cannot grasp God through your material senses, then He does not exist. Just because one cannot see Him with their senses (because He does not fall within one's perception of form, taste, sound, smell or touch), people dedicated to the truth and to the search of the truth do not reject His existence. Sages dedicated to the truth can perceive His existence, and they can reveal His authenticity through their perception of Him.

Ultimately, man is not reality—God is

Just as the *jīva* soul is one reality, so is God—He is another

reality. He is also a personality. Unless you direct your actions towards this infinitely potent Personality, filled with eternity, knowledge and bliss, it is not possible to practise the highest religion—neither do your actions then produce the highest benefit for the *jīva* soul. Everybody must accept this hard reality. I understand that atoms and molecules are true, I understand that the man is true, but as much as a man is true, the soil is true, the birds are true—so is God. “I am human, therefore I am higher than everyone else”—this is not the true conception. There is a famous saying, “Man is the truth and there is none above him.” This is not a true conception. “Bangladesh is the best country”—this sentiment is not the truth, as much as it is not true that man is higher than everyone else—God is above everyone, He is the highest entity. I am serving mankind, I am serving the trees, cows, dogs, etc.—I do everything, but if your service is confined in this way, then you must understand that you have not realised the highest purpose of your life.

Through service to the Lord the soul can attain supreme benefit

Service to the *jīva* souls is not everything. It can be religious, but service to the Lord is higher than service to the *jīva* souls. The main subject of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is service to the Lord. The Lord is a personality and it is necessary to serve Him—these are not just some utopian or empty words. *Jīva* souls cannot realise their highest purpose unless they connect all their activities, religion, qualifications, etc. with the service of the Lord. You have done everything—served plants, birds, dogs, men; but if you have not served the Lord, then you must understand that your life is passing in a dead state. In human birth, you can serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead. However if you do not serve Him, then you can never say you have realised the purpose of your life. Many are self-centred—they enjoy nice food, things, go to the cinema and use the money they earn for their own

pleasure. Some also acquire some things and give them away for their family to enjoy. Some engage in the service to the community, country or the world. As you sow, so you reap—the result you get depends on what you do. What is the practical result of such actions? If you analyse it, you will see that all this brings about money, knowledge, and fame, but it does not fulfil the highest purpose of our life because even if we do all these things nicely, we will still live amidst so many problems. If the highest benefit was truly good, then we would definitely attain perfection and all our problems would be removed. However, even if you gain all possible qualifications, actually your highest attainment would not be realised. You can still lose your child and be overcome with grief, your health can go down and you can suffer from all kinds of pains. Therefore, you can understand that supreme benefit does not come through religion, wealth or fruitive action.

It is impossible to solve *jīva* souls' problems without service to the Lord

Some serve *jīva* souls heart and soul, going beyond their capacity, but why do they not get the highest reward, peace and joy in their life? Great sages say that if the *jīva* soul does not serve Tīrthapād (the Supreme Lord whose lotus feet are a place of pilgrimage), they will not get the highest benefit, peace and joy—they leave the infinitely powerful, eternal, cognisant and blissful Supreme Lord out of their lives. Because they do not do anything for Him, their problems are never solved—happiness or perfection never comes.

What do those who engage in the service of the Lord get? This too can be understood through the result of such service. The benefit does not come through mere lip-deep acceptance. A servant of the Lord can say, "I have never got to enjoy good

health, a long life, wealth, fame, good things and good food, but I am telling you from experience—I have got one thing, and that is peace, or happiness. I have not become a president, a scientist or a big poet. I am staying in a small thatched house that from time to time gets flooded when it rains, but I am happy. I established myself in the service of the Lord and I feel peace, happiness." Great souls often humbly say that there is no soul in this world as shameless as they are, but that is not true—such souls live quite peacefully, they have no problems.

God is eternal and real

jagāi mādhāi haite muṣi se pāpiṣṭha
 purīṣera kīta haite muṣi se laghiṣṭha
 mora nāma śune yei puṇya kṣaya
 mora nāma laya yei tāra pāpa haya
 amana nirghṛṇa more kebā kṛpā kare
 eka nityānanda vinu jagat-bhitare

"I am more sinful than Jagāi and Mādhāi and lower than the worms in stool. If anyone hears my name, they lose all auspiciousness; if anyone takes my name, they become sinful. Who in this world but Nityānanda could show His mercy to such an abominable person as me?"

(Sri Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 1.5.205-207)

Such is the expression of humility that is heard from the mouth of a great soul. They do not have any problems in their life, but there is no end of problems for those who do not live their life in the service of the Lord. Those who have much money know no peace—they only know burning pain. Somebody donates a million rupees, but even then they will not know peace because there is always somebody else who donates two and a half million rupees—after that, their name will be outshone, and that will give pain too. Everybody says, "Health is wealth," but even health can

be pesky—even very healthy people sometimes get sick. There is disturbance in money, health, fame. Very famous people know no peace. However, those who feel satisfaction sincerely serving the Supreme Lord, who become established in the service of the Lord knowing Him to be full of eternity, auspiciousness, beauty (*satya, śiva, sundara*), eternity, knowledge, and bliss (*sat, chid, ānanda*)—they live happily in peace. When one establishes the magnanimous, sweet, beautiful Supreme Lord in their heart, then what is the need for money, gold, silver, knowledge and fame? What do they need a palatial building for? What do they need to get votes from people for? What is the value of being a poet, scientist or a philosopher when you do not serve Supreme Lord Tīrtha-pād? It will give you no peace. Material positivists say at this point, "All these talks about God are absolutely unreal." But if you think about it, you will understand that appearance, qualifications, money, name, fame, self-establishment, nothing will last forever. All these things are extremely temporary. They are not eternal. Even the moon, the sun, planets will be destroyed at the time of universal destruction. But the Lord remains. He does not die. This is a profound truth. Even if the *jīva* souls cannot realise this, it is still a fact. Just as I exist, God exists too, even more so than I. At least at the time of death one must think that there is something called 'God'. At a critical moment in life, stricken with grief and pain, people say, "O Lord, where are You?" This thought comes to their mind. If there was no God, then why would this thought come from within? Sound cannot come from nowhere. If something is empty, it is empty. However God is eternally present in the heart of every *jīva* soul in His *antaryāmi* form (as the Supersoul). Until and unless you receive His *darśan*, your problems can never be solved. If this truth is not realised or practised, one can never get peace in life.

Research of scientists devoid of God consciousness is the garbage of the world

Devoid of theism and faith in the Lord, scientific researches create so much garbage in this world nowadays. Even if science, literature, etc. prosper, their devoid of God consciousness knowledge or science leads to unrest and destruction in the world. Atom bombs, nuclear bombs can destroy the whole world within one moment, they cause outcries of weeping in the world, they can bring vile crematorium-like monstrosity to the world, but can they give peace, happiness and love to this world? Wireless, radio, television, aeroplane bring some physical comfort to human society, but they can never bring love, affection, mutual trust, compassion, empathy or happiness. They create a noise of jealousy and competition in this world. Russia cannot love America, or America cannot trust Russia, there is mutual distrust, animosity and cold war. The more press-conferences are held, the more their distrust, malice and hatred grow—because there is no faith in the universal father, the Supreme Lord.

Sublime goal of life is devotion to the Lord and the peace, happiness, love and sweetness attainable in the service of the Lord

"I will live in the world of material poets, scientists, and research. I do not need God in my life"—then you will not get any peace and happiness. This is the stern truth. Service to God brings happiness, this is a guaranteed fact. It is not some hypothesis. Make an experiment and practise it, and you will see whether you become happy or not. If you get *darśan* of the Lord, you will certainly feel happy. Unless you spend your life in the service of the Lord, your life passes in vain and unrest in your life will only increase. God is real, you cannot even conceive that

He exists eternally. His lotus feet are an abode of fearlessness and nectar, devoid of any grief. It is necessary to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness in your life. Devotion to the Lord is the highest attainment and practice. This is the highest duty in one's life, all other things are inferior. There is no use debating about it. The proof of the pudding is in the eating—this truth is realised as a result of practising such life. The path of devotion to the Supreme Lord bestows the highest benefit.

etāvān eva loke 'smiṁ pūṁśām dharmāḥ paraḥ smṛtaḥ
bhakti-yogo bhagavati tan-nāma-grahaṇādibhiḥ

“Devotional service, beginning with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, is the ultimate religious principle for the living entity in human society.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 6.3.22)

On difference between service to God and service to jīva souls

Devotion means serving to the Lord with affection, with love. You can connect with the Supreme by practising knowledge, yoga, etc., but this connection is easy through devotion. What is devotion? It is spiritual service. It is not service to *jīva* souls—it is service to the Lord. If you serve *jīva* souls, you will not get that greatest joy and happiness—you can get heaven, etc. some transitory matter. You can connect with the Lord through devotion. Do something for Him with love, and you will see—you will definitely feel happiness and peace. All problems in one's life can be solved through the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord—it does not occur by satisfaction of one's country, mother, or other people. Service to other people will not give you supreme peace. If you practise these things leaving Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you will see that you will never get any peace—you will suffer life after life. “Man is the truth and there is none above him”—this conception

is not true. God is the truth and there is none above Him. *Jīva* is neither *śiva*, nor God. If you serve cows, you can drink milk. If you serve dogs, they will guard your house. If you serve your country, it will give you fame and adoration. However, if you serve God, you will get peace, happiness, beauty and love.

God is eternally manifest within His Name, Deity and devotee

But where is He? How can I feed Him? I will massage His feet, but where is He? He *is*. There are rules regarding how one must serve Him, and they are quite scientific. You must first learn the method and rules, then serve. Just as your mother, your son, etc. are real, so is He—God is real. You place your son on your lap, and in the same way you can take the Lord on your lap. There are some laws and rules how to come to perceive this reality. He is present in the form of His Holy Name, He is also present in the form of the Deity, and He is also present within His devotee. He reveals Himself within His devotee. Serve the Holy Name, and you will be able to see Him within His Holy Name. He *is* the Name. If you chant the Holy Name with love, you will definitely feel His touch. Serve His Deity, you will feel happy. A Deity is not a doll. “*Pratimā naha tumi, sākṣat् vrajendra-nandana*—You are not an idol, You are Vrajendra-nandan Himself.” He reveals Himself before the *jīva* souls in His Deity form. If you do not serve God, if you do not have devotion for God, then no matter what great scholar you are, how rich you are, how expert you are at literature, you will not find a solution for your unhappiness. Unless you enter spiritual service, your problem will not be solved. No matter what other culture except for the service to the Lord you practise, the problems in your life will not be resolved. The civilisation, culture, education that is devoid of Krṣṇa consciousness has no value—it is simply rivalry,

distrust, hatred and competition. However, if you do even some smallest service to the Lord, you will feel peace, happiness and love. Moreover, everyone can become initiated into the service of the Lord—sinful, suffering, atheistic, hedonistic people, enjoyers, materialists, realists, etc. They can enter into the Lord's service and gain the greatest benefit and attain perfection in their life.

**Great souls can engage souls in spiritual service,
whatever plane they are on**

Those who engage themselves in the service of the Lord, can engage anyone else in His service—they can engage such atheistic, materially attached, fallen and low souls as yourself in the service of the Lord. They can convert such wicked people as materialists, sinners and enjoyers into Lord's devotees (by engaging them in service). Only great souls can make such transformation. Therefore, if you die without serving the Lord, then you must understand that your life has passed in vain. Next life, you will have to suffer the result of this failure to the bone. You will have to burn from all kinds of miseries. It is very shameful and very deplorable if one has to face death without having served the Lord. One must cross this ocean of material existence along with the void wasteland. Everyone must try very hard to serve the Lord right now, without delay. Everyone—women, men, old, young, foolish and educated—must accept service to the Lord; otherwise your life will pass—and others will be crying for you, and you will cry with them. Great souls are like a bridge between the Lord and the *jīva* soul—they help to connect with the Lord. Everyone must become determined to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We *must* serve the Lord. We must practise something for His service, otherwise life will be wasted. It is a stern truth, but it is a real truth.

The Lord appears to rescue jīva souls

Praying for the mercy of Śrī Śrī Guru-varga and Śrī Gurupādpadma, we have assembled here on the occasion of Śrī Vraja Maṇḍal *parikramā*, on the holy day of Śrī Govardhan Pūjā *mahā-mahotsav*, at Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī Sevā Āśram in Śrī Govardhan. We have got this opportunity to hear about the teachings of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

jīvasya yaḥ saṁsarato vimokṣaṇam
na jānato ‘nartha-vahāch chharīrataḥ
līlāvatāraiḥ sva-yaśaḥ pradīpakaṁ
prājvālayat tvā tam aham prapadye

“The living being caught in the cycle of birth and death does not know how he can be delivered from the material body, which brings him so much trouble. But You, the Supreme Lord, descend to this world in various personal forms, and by performing Your pastimes You illumine the soul’s path with the blazing torch of Your fame. Therefore I surrender unto You.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 10.70.39)

Jivātmā is covered by body, mind, intelligence, and ego

A *jīva* soul is situated with the clutches of a faulty body, a faulty mind, a faulty intelligence, and a faulty ego. This conditioned *jīva* soul’s body is a repository of all evils that have covered the spiritual soul to such an extent that it is now very hard for it to cast off all this coverings. We cannot even understand this. These coverings come in different forms, in different moods, and torture the soul. The mind that has forgotten Kṛṣṇa is attacked by

many kinds of evils (*anarthas*). The mind wants logic, argument, an exercise of brain—it is inclined towards physical, ethical, psychological culture. In this way, by the influence of illusory environment, *jīva* souls become deprived of the service to the Lord. That is why, Kṛṣṇa Himself takes the heart and halo of Śrī Rādhā and appears in Śrī Māyāpur Dhām in the form of Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu. Going door to door, He distributes the gift of His own Holy Name. He told,

pṛthivīte āchhe yata nagarādi-grāma
sarvatra prachāra haibe mora nāma

“My Name will spread to every village and town on this earth.”

After Mahāprabhu manifested His disappearance pastime, He has been sending His own associates in the form of a guru. Descending through the *guru paramparā*, Śrī Gauḍīya *guru-varga* have been distributing Mahāprabhu’s divine gift, following His conception and preaching it all over the world. This is how such fallen souls as ourselves are getting now an opportunity to serve the Lord.



Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur and the distinction of the line he introduced

**Śrīla Bhaktivinod is Śrī Gaurasundar's close associate,
his renown exists eternally**

Obeisance to Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur:

namo bhaktivinodāya sach-chid-ānanda-nāmine
gaura-śakti-svarūpāya rūpānuga-varāya to

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto Sad-chid-ānanda Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur, who is transcendental energy of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. He is a strict follower of the goswāmīs, headed by Śrī Rūpa."

We pray to him with this *pranām-mantra*. He is Sachchidānanda, he is Bhaktivinod. Śrī Bhakti Devī rests within his heart. He has pleased (*vinodita*) devotion (*bhakti*). This Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur appeared in this material world almost 124 years ago by the desire of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar. Desiring to fulfil the innermost desire of Śrī Gaurasundar to bestow His joyous service onto the souls, Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur appeared in this world and performed his pastimes. Appearance of a close associate of Gaura is a blessing for the world. When a king is born, literary experts and poets sing in his praise, but when a great soul appears to spread eternal auspiciousness in this world, nobody cares. This is a deplorable fortune. When fortune is in a calamitous state, then people of the world remain apathetic towards the search for such a great soul. However, such calamity has not come yet to this world, therefore his fame, renown is being proclaimed to this day—to this day, it has not become

obsolete. Although many do not know about him, but there are many people who keep the news about such great souls. The news about Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur was not published in any mundane newspaper, but, among followers of Śrī Gaura, his wondrous renown is imprinted in gold in the hearts of Vaiṣṇavas. The renown of the associates of Śrī Gaura (closest devotees of Śrī Gaura) is eternal and will exist eternally. In the devotees' society, their fame and renown is preached everywhere eternally.

The path of devotion is strewn with millions of thorns or thistles. When the path of devotion becomes strewn with thorns or thistles, when the current of devotion becomes feeble, then there arises the necessity to nourish this current; when the sound of Śrī Harinām is not heard, what is feeble becomes even more feeble—at that time, Lord Śrī Gaurasundar chooses one of His close associates and says, “You must go to the material world for a few days. Look, the sound of *kīrtan* is fading out, go to this material world and make the feeble current of devotion flow with new strength. Preach again to the public about the current of My eternal devotion that continues flowing eternally. Preach My Holy Name everywhere, in every village that exists in this world.” Therefore, Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur appeared in Nadia district (the place where Śrī Gaurasundar Himself appeared) 124 years ago to fulfil the innermost desire of Śrī Gaurasundar.

Nāma-saṅkīrtan is the only religion in Kali-yuga

Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar is the father of *saṅkīrtan*. Śrī Gaurasundar nourishes and takes care of *saṅkīrtan* in the same way that a father takes care of his son. Preaching the religion of the age, distribution of the Holy Name and divine love, and their protection—these are the three ways in which He manifests His mercy in this world. *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* is the religion of Kali-yuga; those *jīva* souls who practice this religion, attain liberation.

People of this day and age, and country consider that this religion is ‘Kali’—argument, logic reasoning, doubt, and atheism. In this age people believe in the material energy, they do not believe in transcendental energy. Through the nuclear weapon, material energy can endanger and seize the whole world in one moment. This is indeed so. However, material power does not have the capacity to create a country or spread peace and auspiciousness. If the transcendental energy takes shelter in some great soul, then he can rescue the entire world within a moment. Your numerous long-standing diseases and problems are not rectified no matter what you do, but if one person who has taken shelter in the transcendental energy wants it, he can cure all your diseases and resolve all your problems within a moment. In this age, people do not believe that the transcendental benefit of this conception is so great and glorious. That is why it is Kali-yuga (age of degradation, quarrel). *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* is the only religion in this materialistic age. Wasted by Kali, *jīva* souls cannot attain their goal by practising *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* or *rāja-yoga*, that is why Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar mercifully appears and preaches about the Holy Name and divine love.

Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur is an embodiment of Gaura’s power

Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur is an embodiment of Gaura-śakti (*Gaura-śakti-svarūpa*). How can one understand his identity? It can only be understood by analysing the effect (*phalena parichayate*). What result do we see in the preaching and activities of the manifest pastimes of Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur? He established the *yuga-dharma* (congregational chanting of the Holy Name), but this is not possible without being empowered by Kṛṣṇa.

kali-kālera dharma—kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana
kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana

"The fundamental religious system in the age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Unless empowered by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot propagate the saṅkīrtan movement."

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 3.7.11)

No human can establish the religion of the age because where there is pure chanting of the Holy Name, there must be power of Kṛṣṇa behind it. We must understand this. The cause is determined by the actions. Effect comes from the cause, therefore the cause can be understood by the effect. "Parvate bahnimān dhūmāt"—there is no fire without smoke. You may not see the fire, but you can see the smoke, so you can understand there is fire by the smoke. In the same way, you can understand the cause by the result.

Pure Hari-kīrtan is impossible without the power of Kṛṣṇa

Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur flooded the world with Hari-kīrtan during his manifest pastimes. What is Hari-saṅkīrtan? Hari-saṅkīrtan does not mean you take the term 'kīrtan' and mix it with some bodily exercise or musical art to get "Nāma-kīrtan." I jump around, give very high lectures and please the minds of people, or I please people's senses by reciting melodious, beautiful, high and ornate poems. This is not what Hari-saṅkīrtan is. You must understand this. If you just dance, sing, give a class, sing some kīrtans, know Sanskrit, explain commentaries, you will not get the result or benefit of Hari-saṅkīrtan. This will be all deceit. You can impress others by that, you can get your name to be published in a newspaper, but nobody will get the real eternal benefit through that. This may attract the jīva souls who are given to enjoyment, but you cannot please Kṛṣṇa with that. There was a mṛḍaiṅga 124 years ago, there were Bhāgavatam books, there were Vaiṣṇav assemblies, temples, etc.—everything was there; there were also

great speakers or scholars, there were many things, but there was no true and pure religion of *saṅkīrtan* that gives supreme auspiciousness to the world and that is spread by the power of Śrī Gaurasundar. Which *kīrtan* is contaminated and untouchable, and which *kīrtan* is empowered can be understood only by the result of the *kīrtan*.

If you do *kīrtan* (chant the glories) of the Lord, then the Lord will arise and manifest Himself through such *kīrtan*.

ei chhaya gosāñi yabe vraje kailā vāsa
 rādhā-kṛṣṇa-nitya-līlā karilā prakāsa
 śrī-rūpa, śrī-sanātana, śrī-bhaṭṭa-raghunātha
 śrī-jīva, gopāla-bhaṭṭa, dāsa-raghunātha

"When these six goswāmīs lived in Vraja, they revealed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's eternal Pastimes. All glory to Śrī Rūpa, Sanātan, Raghuṇāth Bhaṭṭa, Śrī Jīva, Gopāl Bhaṭṭa, and Raghuṇāth Dās!"

The result of proper *Hari-kīrtan* is attainment of Kṛṣṇa

These six *goswāmīs* revealed hidden Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the *kīrtan* of the Lord—the eternal pastimes of Goloka became manifest on earth. When they performed *kīrtan*—produced Hari-kathā through their writings—and at that time Kṛṣṇa, who is full of blissful pastimes, appeared. It is said, "Kṛṣṇa personally appears in *Hari-saṅkīrtan* (*Hari-saṅkīrtane kṛṣṇa svayam ābirbhuta haben*)."¹ That is the result of *Hari-saṅkīrtan*. The Name, form, qualities, pastimes of Kṛṣṇa reveal themselves. Those who can chant such *kīrtan* or hear such *kīrtan* will get the realisation that the Lord is full of love and mercy. Suppose there is a discussion about Kṛṣṇa—if one's heart does not get attracted to Him or the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa does not arise in the listeners after hearing such discussion, then you must understand that it is not the proper *saṅkīrtan*. In the proper pure *Hari-saṅkīrtan* (glorification, chanting the glories and Names of the Lord), One will feel in their

heart that Śrī Nām Prabhu is *sach-chid-ānanda* (eternal, cognisant, and blissful). “*Nāma amani udita haya, bhakata-gīta-sāme*—when devotees chant the Holy Name, the Holy Name arises on its own.” If the desire to know about Him and the inclination to serve Him awakens within you, then you must understand that you have heard the proper *Hari-saṅkīrtan*. When one merely displays his skills in singing and playing music instruments, such result does not come. If the power of Kṛṣṇa has not appeared within you, it means your *kīrtan* is just a bogus noise.

Eternal benefit of Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur’s pure *Hari-kīrtan*

Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur sang songs about Kṛṣṇa, wrote books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness and preached, and established the Supreme Lord in the temples of many people’s hearts. Those who have read his books, who have heard his lectures, experienced a radical transformation in their lives. He is a revealer of *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojanā* of Kṛṣṇa-tattva: knowledge about the relationship, main goal and means to attain the goal. He transmitted the power of Kṛṣṇa, he performed pure *Hari-kīrtan*. It is necessary to realise this within our hearts. Crossing the river alone and crossing the river together with many people is not one and the same thing. Śrī Gaurasundar, who established *Nāma-saṅkīrtan*, performed *saṅkīrtan* together with everyone else all over India—in Nabadwīp, Vṛndāvan, Nīlāchal, etc.; in the same way, Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur, empowered by Śrī Gaurasundar, performed *saṅkīrtan* to bring many people to the abode of eternal joy (*‘nitya-ānanda-dhām’*).

Kīrtan, saṅkīrtan and Holy Name—distinctive characteristic of *saṅkīrtan*

“I will sit in one place and practise on my own”—this is *bhajan*. However, *Nāma-kīrtan* and *Nāma-saṅkīrtan* are not one and the

same, there are certain distinctions between the two. If you chant the Holy Name alone or with five other people, this is *kīrtan*—some chant the Holy Name with this idea. However, *saṅkīrtan* is performed together with many people. “*Bahubhi-militvā yat kīrtanam, tad eva saṅkīrtanam*”—when many people come together and glorify the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, it is known as *saṅkīrtan*.” Somebody is singing *kīrtan* (tries to puff a hookah), but the ‘hookah does not work’: the rhythm, tempo, tune is there, they give elaborate eloquent lectures and sounds just like actors in an open-air drama performance; this kind of function performed together with the ungodly, faithless, given to enjoyment people is not *saṅkīrtan*. *Saṅkīrtan* can take place only among those who are relishing divine mellows of devotion, whose hearts are pure, who have got taste for the Lord and attachment to the Lord, who are at least serious and have faith in the scriptures, otherwise those who at least have faith in devotees, devotion and the Lord. *Saṅkīrtan* can take place when participants at least have some faith for God awakened inside them. *Saṅkīrtan* can take place when the participants have faith, are fixed in their spiritual life and who have taste for it. *Kīrtan* of a pure devotee is attended by those who have faith—such pure devotees radiate the power of Kṛṣṇa through their *kīrtan* (chanting of the Holy Name and Hari-kathā). Such devotees may not wear a *brāhmaṇī* thread, *tilaks*, neck beads, etc.—such *saṅkīrtan* does not have to do with a particular appearance or clothes. One can wear any clothes, but he can be empowered by Kṛṣṇa. Such singers of *kīrtan* are always surrounded by many people—they do not practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness alone in seclusion, and they do not chant *kīrtan* with drug addicts. Those who chant the Holy Name together with many pure, pious, eminent, and clean people, are proper performers of *saṅkīrtan*—they are truly empowered by Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur awakened the result of Kṛṣṇa-*kīrtan* in the hearts of many people. What result was that?

chetodarpaṇamārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam
 śreyah kairava chandrikā-vitaranam vidyāvadhūjīvanam
 ānandāmbudhivardhanaṁpratipadamaṁpūrṇāṁtāsvādanam
 sarvātmasnapanam param vijayate śrīkṛṣṇasaṅkirtanam

"The Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa cleanses the mirror of the heart and extinguishes the fire of misery in the forest of birth and death. As the evening lotus blooms in the moon's cooling rays, the heart begins to blossom in the nectar of the Name. And at last the soul awakens to its real inner treasure a life of love with Kṛṣṇa. Again and again tasting nectar, the soul dives and surfaces in the ever-increasing ocean of ecstatic joy. All phases of the self of which we may conceive are fully satisfied and purified, and at last conquered by the all-auspicious influence of the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa."

saṅkīrtana haite pāpa-saṁsāra-nāśana
 chitta-śuddhi, sarva-bhakti-sādhana-udgama

"By performing congregational chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, one can destroy the sinful condition of material existence, purify the unclean heart and awaken all varieties of devotional service."

kṛṣṇa-premodgama, premāṁṛta-āsvādana
 kṛṣṇa-prāpti, sevāṁṛta-samudre majjana

"The result of chanting is that one awakens his love for Kṛṣṇa and tastes transcendental bliss. Ultimately, one attains the association of Kṛṣṇa and engages in His devotional service, as if immersing himself in a great ocean of love."

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 3.20.12-14)

**Pure chanting of the Holy Name cleanses the mirror
 of the heart, extinguishes the fire of material existence,
 satisfies and takes the soul to Kṛṣṇa**

Is the mirror of your heart becoming cleansed? Is the fire of material existence becoming extinguished? Is your heart

blossoming in the nectar of the Name as a lotus blossoms in the moon's cooling rays? Are you tasting nectar at every step? Has your whole being become cool? If all these feelings come, then you can know that this is the proper Kṛṣṇa-kīrtan—your heart is becoming clean, you are getting taste of divine love, your material desires are being removed, and your attachment to your body, house, wife, children, etc. is getting lax. You feel attracted to Kṛṣṇa, your whole being becomes gripped and attracted towards Śrī Gaurasundar. When the mirror of your heart becomes clean, the beautiful image of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa will reflect in it. The hearts of so many people became cleansed through Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur's *saṅkīrtan*—rough, uncultured hearts became refined and clean; inclinations to sins and all other desires went away; and by hearing his heart-touching Hari-kathā, the hearts of many people became drawn to Kṛṣṇa and rejoiced; many felt attachment and attraction towards Kṛṣṇa; and those who became fond of *saṅkīrtan* attained divine love. This is the result of Kṛṣṇa-kīrtan. Affected by Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur's Hari-kīrtan, many people started to live their lives practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness and listening to Hari-kathā. Because their hearts came in touch with divinity, their whole being became joyful. In this way, Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur makes devotion (*bhakti*) happy (*vinodita*)—Bhakti Devī becomes delighted hearing his Hari-kathā and *kīrtan*, his Hari-kathā and *kīrtan* make devotion reveal itself. Śrī Śyāmasundar and Śrī Gaurasundar become happy through that. That is why his name is '*bhakti-vinod*'. His current never becomes extinct; the current of his mercy remains flowing even today. His *kīrtan*, like a firework rocket, swooshes up into the sky and, producing a loud sound, showers a never-expiring light upon the earth. His *kīrtan* does not produce a sudden flash and then fades out. He himself practised Kṛṣṇa consciousness and radiated light. It is not that he left and everything has become quiet. He made sure that after his disappearance the world would remain

as lit up as it was during his manifest pastimes. Therefore, the current of pure devotion that he introduced remains flowing even now. Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur kept this current going—by his wish and inspiration, Śrīla Prabhupād Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhakur made this current faster and stronger. Such was the desire of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar:

pr̥thivīte āchhe yata nagarādi-grāma
sarvatra prachāra haibe mora nāma

“This Name will be distributed all over the world—in all the villages, towns, and cities that there are in this world.”

The continuity of devotees who guard and preserve this current remains in this world eternally. This is a spiritual truth, and this is a practical matter that can be realised by the effect—so many people are becoming attracted to this devotional current, and so many people dedicate themselves to this path.

There are many great souls now, and they will always be there, but it is very rare to come across the great souls who come to establish the current of *saṅkīrtan*. If there is no connection with Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur’s mercy, then no matter how much you play the drum there will not be any *Hari-saṅkīrtan*. There are so many newspapers being published, so many lectures and *kīrtans* are being held, but all this does not awaken divine love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If the power of Kṛṣṇa appears somewhere, it can be realised by the result of such chanting or lecture. If you come in touch with it but still cannot see it, cannot hear it, then your fortune is very bad—you have no appreciation for reality. If you cannot enjoy the sight of the sunrise, it means you are blind. This is a matter of malice, grudge, envy or jealousy—not devotion.

adyāpiha sei līlā kare gaura-rāya
kona kona bhāgyavāna dekhibāre pāya

“Gaura Rāya continues performing His Pastimes, and those who are fortunate can see it.”

He hides these pastimes, but Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur comes to establish this current of the power of Śrī Gaurasundar.

Secret distinction of Śrī Bhaktivinod Thākur's line

This line has one special distinction. Śrī Gaurasundar sent Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur to remove all opposing propensities that throw thorns, obstacles, difficulties, and misconceptions on the path of devotion. He not only removed all thorns on the path of devotion, he also cleansed the mirrors of the hearts of fortunate souls and made pure devotion arise there. The current of Bhaktivinod (*bhaktivinod-dhārā*) flows within the current of Śrī Gaurasundar, there is no higher current than that of Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur.

Kīrtan, saṅkīrtan, and mahā-saṅkīrtan are not one and the same. This realisation does not come to the one whose consciousness has not awakened. *Kīrtans* are sung in many places, but not all *kīrtans* are the same. A festival (*utsav*), a great festival (*mahā-utsav*) and a grand festival (*mahā-mahā-utsav*) are not one and the same. In some places, there is *kīrtan*, in some places *saṅkīrtan*, and in some places *mahā-saṅkīrtan*. However, *mahā-mahā-saṅkīrtan* is very rare. “*Kona kona bhāgyavāna dekhibāre pāya*—those who are fortunate can see it.” If your heart is dirty or you are blind with material interests, how will you be able to see anything transcendental? People are deprived of the grand festival (*mahā-mahā-utsav*) of *Hari-saṅkīrtan*. If you have an open mind, if your heart is clean, and if you do not have enmity or hostility, then all this will clearly appear before your eyes—*mahā-saṅkīrtan* will be resounding in your ears, and you will realise what a beautiful *kīrtan* devotees do and how much joy they do it with.

Guru-varga who appears in this line are greatly empowered

The *mahā-saṅkīrtan*, the *mahā-parikramā* and the *maha-archan* that Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thakur has brought to this world are continuing to this day. Great gurus are those who worship the Lord together with others and who bestow benefit on many people as a result of their great worship. They give great benefit to so many *jīva* souls. This is the distinction of this current. Those who appear in this line perform *mahā-saṅkīrtan*, *maha-archan*, and *mahā-parikramā*. They can circumambulate the holy abode of Śrī Gaura on their own, or this holy circumambulation could be held based on one's qualification, but instead, they go on Śrī Gaura Dhām parikramā, Śrī Vraja Dhām parikramā, Śrī Kṣetra Dhām parikramā together with thousands of people installing Śrī Śyāmasundar in their hearts. By doing so they distribute great auspiciousness and supreme benefit. In this way, the current of *mahā-saṅkīrtan* is flowing within the current or line of Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur. When a power-house gives the current, we can see that there is light—in the same way, we can see that this current is still flowing because it is empowered by Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur.

Unobstructed current of Śrī Bhaktivinod

His blessing, mercy, and inspiration is coming—it is only because a flow of mercy is descending from Śrī Gaurasundar or His close associates that this can be possible. You may not be qualified, but because you have come to this line you must get some benefit—just as when a king has a son, he automatically becomes the crown prince or ‘king’ and gets all the ministers, generals, subjects, wealth, etc. He may not have the same power as the previous king, but just because he is the son of the king, the king’s power enters him. In this way, the government of the kingdom remains in order. In the same way, because there are

great souls in this line, by their mercy the power descends in the line of the *guru-paramparā*—that entire power can be found within such great souls. They radiate all this power. If the king has a successor, then his power will not stop. In the same way, Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur's current will never stop. This is told by the scriptures, as well as by the very own associates of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar Himself. Why will this current be never stopped? Because He by whose will Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur's current was manifested finds fulfilment of His desires within this channel. This channel will never dry out. This channel, or current, is flowing to this day. Wherever this current is manifest, there is always *mahā-kīrtan*, *mahā-sevā*, and *mahā-utsav* (great chanting of the glories of the Lord; great service; and great festival) that bestow great benefit. So many people appreciate it. By the very will of Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar, this is continuing to this day. Those who bathe in this current, who become initiated into this current, and who prostrate themselves in obeisance to this current, are very fortunate—they get an opportunity to get benefit from coming in touch with the flow of this great current. Even though Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur has disappeared, this current remains manifest. In this way, his inseparable pastime continues in an unobstructed way.

This current originates from the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Therefore, the chair of the guru comes to those who reveal Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur's channel within the *guru-paramparā* fulfilling the innermost desire of Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur. They preach following the same method, the same rules and preserve this current in the same way that Śrīla Bhaktivinod Thākur had established. It is being preserved as a strong uninterrupted current. When one person disappears, then another person appears. Like the Ganges, this current flows

from Śrī Gaurasundar—it originates from the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Because this current is coming from “*charaṇa-sīdhu*” (holy water that washes the feet of the Lord), it never stops and will never be stopped. This current is preserved and protected amidst terrible storms and rainstorms. Nobody can destroy this current, at the same time no house, money, common worldly people, or material wealth can protect it—it is protected by Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar Himself. Those who are born in the house of Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur, within his lineage (i.e. who are born into his line), protect this *saikīrtan-dharma*.

**Following this line with a sincere heart
takes one to Vaikuṇṭha**

You must remove all your worries and thoughts and give the Lord place in your heart. Money, other people, father, mother, material things, etc.—you must take everything out of your heart and seat devotees, devotion and the Lord there. That is what is called practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If we want to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness with body, mind, and speech, then we must throw away all material desires from our heart and give *saikīrtan* place to sit there instead. Those who want to engage in practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness, must free space in their hearts. Those who do not want to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, have no place in their hearts. If you follow Śrīla Bhaktivinod Ṭhākur’s line, you will be taken to Vaikuṇṭha—if you heart and soul take complete shelter in this line, then you will be sheltered and taken care of.

āśraya laiyā bhaje, tāre kṛṣṇa nāhi tyāje
 āra saba mare akāraṇa

“Krishna never leaves those who have taken shelter in Him. All others simply die in vain.”

Śrī Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād’s Nectar of Instruction

Śrī Hari-kathā-kīrtan is the dearmost service to the Gaudīya Guru-varga

Those who have accepted the path of devotion practise nine kinds of practices of devotion beginning from *śravan*, *kīrtan*, etc. or, like Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī, become surrendered and practise eleven types of devotion along with the service to the guru. Some take a guru just to save themselves from the path of hell or for some material benefit (“to clean the water in their hands”; to grease their palms); but if we leave such people aside, those who have accepted a guru to attain real devotion, who have taken shelter of Śrī Gurupādpadma, in one way or another certainly practise devotional practices—whether they practise little or much, they lead a regular practising life. Real and eager practitioners practise devotion in a manner that exceeds their very capacity. They do not consider that practising devotional activities is the same as performing various material works. They give topmost priority to devotion and practise any or all of practices (*śravan*, *kīrtan*, etc.) with firm determination. Generally, people place much emphasis on *śravan* (hearing), *kīrtan* (chanting) and *archan* (Deity worship), yet those who are very clever place the topmost emphasis on *kīrtan*. *Kīrtan* is not just humming or singing some tune. *Anu-kīrtan* is the Hari-kathā that is heard from Śrī Gurudev or Vaiṣṇavs. This is the dearmost, the highest *guru-sevā* of the Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavs. Gaudīya *guru-varga* give the topmost priority to the *kīrtan* of Hari-kathā. Glorification of the Lord (*Hari-kīrtan*) is an intimate service to one’s Śrī Gurudev. Those who go door to door glorifying the Lord to whoever they meet, do the most

cherished, desired service of Śrī Gurudev. *Śravaṇ* and *kīrtan* make it possible to attain the personal Name, form, qualities, pastimes and associates of the Supreme Lord, and especially the service to the Supreme Lord.

Practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness spur progress

It is possible to attain personal service to the Supreme Lord by His grace. Those who desire to get such mercy, who want to get the Lord exclusively, get it through practising *śravaṇ*, *kīrtan*, *archan*, etc. Therefore, a true practitioner lives his life with these three practices following the order of Śrī Gurudev. If you get a qualified Vaiṣṇav, you must listen to Hari-kathā from him, otherwise practise *kīrtan* or do *archan*. A genuine practitioner may hold spiritual programmes, or Śrī Gurudev may engage a practitioner in a spiritual programme, but generally we see that when you attend such programmes, your devotion does not develop, i.e. the expected result does not come. What is the reason for this? Somebody gets the result, and somebody does not—the practising process may be the same, but why do some get the result and some do not? It is also possible that one may attend these programmes and actually go backward instead of forward. What is the reason for this? Why does this happen to even those who take shelter of a great soul, who stay at the temple established by a great soul? Why does one not advance even though they get so much mercy, so much guidance and so much instruction from their *guru-varga*? When a person earns a lot, but spends everything, they will always feel they lack money--in the same way, the result of the practice of such unsuccessful practitioners goes out through the holes of unwanted habits (*anarthas*) and offences (*aparadhas*). The great result of *śravaṇ*, *kīrtan*, *archan*, etc. goes through the holes of unwanted practices and offences. If you give tasty and healthy food to a sick person who has worms and

insect in their stomach, their body will not be nourished through that—in the same way, when the result of spiritual practice goes through the holes of unwanted habits and offences, one does not advance spiritually. It is necessary to close these holes.

vācho vegam manasaḥ krodha-vegam
jihvā-vegam udaropastha-vegam
etān vegān yo viṣaheta dhīraḥ
sarvām apīmāṁ pṛthivīṁ sa śisyat

‘A sober person who can tolerate (1) the urge to speak, (2) the mind’s demands, (3) the actions of anger and the urges of the (4) tongue, (5) belly and (6) genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world.’

(Śrī Upadeśāmṛta, 1)

If the tongue that chants the Holy Name (*Hari-nāma kīrtan*) also utters some vile words (engages in vile talks), then the result of such chanting (*kīrtan*) is destroyed. A tongue is not for *prajalpa* (idle talks, gossiping) or *grāmya-kathā* (village talks). One must keep a tongue only for chanting the Holy Name—if you cannot do it, then the Holy Name will not be able to extend its true effect. If you love talking about other things more than you love chanting the Holy Name, then Śrī Nām Prabhu will not extend His mercy there. You cannot progress on the path of devotion if you feel more attachment to other talks.

Therefore, if you live your life in bad association, spending time on gossiping, idle talks and other *grāmya-kathā*, then your chanting of the Holy Name will never progress. In the same manner, those who are always careful about this, attain gradual spiritual progress—because their holes are closed. You practise favourable to devotion activities, but when you lose all that result by taking the association of the whore standing in front of you in her beautiful form of bad association and talks, how can you progress then? No matter how good and qualified you may be, if

you are attached to a prostitute, all your good qualities vanish—in the same way, people given to *prajalpa* (idle talks, gossiping, any talks except Kṛṣṇa-kathā) may practise spiritual life, but all their attempts to practise will be destroyed in the *prajalpa*. The talks that can arouse joy, can also mortify others. *Vākyā-vega* (the urge to speak) is mostly derogatory and injurious. That is why Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād first mentions this urge. Rough-spoken people and people given to material talks may practise *śravan*, *kīrtan* or *archan*, but it is all in vain—all result will be destroyed. If you want to get devotion, you must control the urge of speech.

Worldly qualification is of no value for an aspiring devotee

Sincere devotional practitioners must maintain a sharp vision and make an earnest effort to progress on the path of devotion. “I must attain devotion in this life!”—it does not matter, whether it is a woman, a man, a rich man, a poor man, whoever maintains such strong desire and practises sincerely can get the Lord. One can attain devotion through whatever they have. For an aspiring devotee (for those who aspire to attain devotion), material, worldly qualification does not have much value. If you can use your worldly qualifications in some activities that are favourable to devotion, then it can merely help you a little. The main necessity is faith, sincerity and no duplicity. Such practitioners of devotion aspiring for progress must always watch out for the things that destroy devotion. Just as rich people in so many ways take care to protect their wealth, in the same way practitioners of devotion must take special care to protect their wealth of devotion. Many often do not bother to see to such careful protection of their wealth, that is why their petty wealth vanishes within a short time, leaving them quite destitute. Those who always practise such devotional activities as *śravan*, *kīrtan*, etc. properly but at

the same time continue doing what is unfavourable to devotion, cannot progress in their spiritual life. When one practises devotional activities, the result of such practices is devotion--why do we then see that even though we practise sincerely, devotion does not arise in us? Because we practise devotion and at the same time we keep on criticising others (*para-nindā*), gossiping about others (*paracharchā*), talking about non-devotional matters (*prajalpa*)—devotion does not come because the devotion you aspire for goes through the holes of such non-devotional activities.

Self-criticism is the way to progress on the path of devotion

Many may not talk about idle or vile material things, but if they think about it in their minds, that is also harmful. The meaning of spiritual practise is to fight against your own unwanted propensities. You must always see your own faults without looking for faults in others; you must criticise yourself, not others.

atyāhāraḥ prayāś cha prajalpo niyamāgraḥ
janasaṅgaś cha laulyaṣcha ṣaḍa bhir-bhaktir-vinaśyati

These six destroy devotion: (1) eating too much, hoarding material things; (2) material desires; (3) listening to nonsense or talking nonsense; (4) being reluctant to practise favourable activities and being eager to practise unfavourable activities; (5) bad association; and (6) being fickle-minded, material attachment, greed.

(Śrī Upadeśāṁṛta, 2)

Both apathy and enthusiasm for rules and regulations oppose devotion

You must obey the order of the *guru-varga* and not leave the temple because when you stay at the temple you are constantly inspired to engage in the service of the Lord. Both being too enthusiastic for following lower rules and regulations and being

too apathetic towards it opposes devotion. Sometimes, even being too enthusiastic to follow rules and regulations can destroy devotion. Suppose, Śrī Gurudev or some Vaiṣṇav comes—you cannot slacken the service to Śrī Gurudev because you want to follow the rules and regulations of your practising life. One time, King Indradyumna was worshipping his Deity when his Gurudev came—because he did not care to leave his worship of the Deity to greet his guru, he got the body of an elephant in his next life. *Laulya* (greed) means being fickle-minded. Suppose you practise the rules and regulations of practising life, but you leave your practice because you are greedy for something else, you feel attracted to material things, to a room, a house, money, you have attachment to gross material things—such mentality takes the practitioner away from devotion. You can check whether or not you worry too much about your health and wealth through service.

Austerity in service determines practitioner's progress

When service comes to a sincere practitioner, their whole being is drawn to that service. A servitor will protect his service rather than his health, whereas materialists will try to protect their body while engaged in various works. Sincere practitioners think that when they do service, their health may be good or may not be good, their body can dry out for all they care! They will not give importance to that, they will continue doing service. The Lord takes charge of such practitioners and accepts all responsibility for them. The duty of practitioners is to serve, and the duty of the Supreme Lord is to protect such practitioners. There are many devotees who stay at the temple, but engage more in idle talks (*prajalpa*) and worries about the body—they must be especially careful about it. It is none of your business to see the faults of others—to see whether someone has some fault or not is the duty that is taken on by Śrī Gurudev. Your job is to do your service.

“sv-alpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt”

“The slightest practice of such a spiritual ideal saves one from the greatest fear.”

If you try to follow the rule and regulations for one year, you will see how much strength will come to your heart.

Without Hari-kathā everything else is prajalpa

atyāhāraḥ prayāś cha prajalpo niyamāgrahah
janasaṅgaś cha laulyaścha ṣaḍa bhir-bhaktir-vinaśyati

Atyāhara does not mean only eating too much. Trying to accumulate more and more things through all the other senses besides the tongue, accepting too many material things is also *atyāhāra*. *Prayāś* is various material endeavours and functions. Useless talks that have no mention of the Supreme Lord are called *prajalpa* (idle, non-devotional talks). All other talks except those that are meant for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord are called *prajalpa*.

Female association must be totally given up

Associating with general people, associating with inauspicious people, with non-devotees and those who abuse moral principles is certainly bad association.

**“asat-saṅga tyāga ei vaiṣṇava āchāra
‘strī-saṅgī’-ek asādhū, kṛṣṇa bhakta āra”**

Strī-saṅga (female association, free mixing) means having very strong attachment to one's wife or husband. Lawful association with a woman that does not contravene the directives of the scriptures and does not hinder the service to the Lord is not undevotional or inauspicious (such association is conducive to the religion of the *varṇāśrama-dharma*), whereas unlawful female association that goes against the rules and regulations

or is taken for the sake of fulfilling one's own material desires and is filled with too much attachment is undevotional. Even if one is married, such association is prohibited. Householder devotees must be always careful about this. Indulgence in such association obstructs devotion. Those who pursue knowledge, fruitive activities, austerities, who live only by drinking milk, even those who attain complete control over their senses (become *jitendriya*)—if they do not respect devotees of the Lord, they are still considered *asādhu* (undevotional). One must never take association of such *asādhus*. “Female” means form, taste, sound, touch, and smell—such mentality of enjoyment, attachment and female association differ in their names only.

“sādhakānām hitārthāya brahmaṇah rūpakalpanāḥ”

“God’s forms are merely imagination to help practitioners.”

Those who say such things about the Lord considering that the activities or pastimes of the Lord are illusory (that His Name, His form, His qualities, His pastimes, His associates are illusory) are staunch *māyāvādīs* (impersonalists). Devotees forget the abstention and false renunciation of such people and never take their association.

“harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇāḥ”

“A non-devotee possesses no good qualities.”

Those who have no devotion to the Supreme Lord are not adorned with any good qualities. Association with both non-devotees and false renunciates (*mayaavadis*) is called *jana-saṅga* (material association).

**“na tathāsyā bhaven moho bandhaś chānya-prasaṅgataḥ
yoṣit-saṅgād yathā pūṁso yathā tat-saṅgi-saṅgataḥ”**

“The infatuation and bondage which accrue to a man from attachment to any other object is not as complete as that resulting from attachment to a woman or to the fellowship of men who are fond of women.” (SB, 3.31.35)

Just other topics have no appeal to the soul, female association and association with those given to female association also has no appeal.

Renunciates, beware!

Renounced devotees must be always alert and avoid the association of materialists and women. Renounced devotees must not go house to house visiting householders without any necessity favourable for the service of the Lord. They may even perform devotional functions with the householders but they must not particularly mix with them. Some may say, “We go to people’s houses to give benefit to the householders,” but we are not talking about those who have attained such right or qualification. Practising devotees in the renounced order must be careful about this. The only relatives of a resident of the Maṭh are the Deities, Guru and Vaiṣṇavs. They must live their life with them. One can be a householder devotee, but they have various things of enjoyment at home, they have women staying at home—immature practitioner can become tempted seeing that. Even if one is a householder devotee, renounced devotees must not frequent their homes without a particular reason. Renounced devotees must mix with renounced devotees. They must not be particularly close to householders.

Laulya means fickle and unsteady conception, it means slackening in your practice of the rules and regulations related to service or being fickle towards the objective. *Laulya* means being fickle in one’s spiritual practice.

“utsāhān niśchayād dhairyāt, tat tat karmapravartanāt
saṅgatyāgāt sato vṛtteḥ ṣaḍbhīr bhaktih prasidhyati”

“There are six principles favorable to the execution of pure devotional service: (1) being enthusiastic, (2) endeavouring with confidence, (3) being patient, (4) acting according to regulative

principles [śravaṇam, kīrtanam, etc.], (5) abandoning the association of non-devotees, and (6) following in the footsteps of the previous āchāryas. These six principles undoubtedly assure the complete success of pure devotional service.”

(Śrī Upadeśāmṛta, 3)

Just as the six faults (*atyāhāra*, etc.) mentioned above deter devotion, in the same way these six good qualities (*utsāhā*, etc.) propel devotion.

Devotion arises by practising with enthusiasm

“*Utsāhāt*” means the desire to be enthusiastic to practise *śravaṇ*, *kīrtan*, *archan*. Even householders who have come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness have given up a lot, whereas renounced devotees have given everything to the lotus feet of their Śrī Guru. If you have given up much or are trying very hard but do not get the proper result, then you feel a lack of enthusiasm, but this should not be so—you must practise devotional activities with even more enthusiasm then. Try to practise more and more properly. Enthusiasm means eagerness—we want to have a right mind, we must not do anything with a depressed mind, we must do everything with affection. Try to extract the *rasa* (devotion, love) from your very life. Everyone must take the *darśan* of the *maigal ārati* in their minds—if you try to take the *darśan* of the *maigal ārati*, following the rules and regulations, with love and affection, for one year, you will see what a nectarean result you will get through that. There is a great difference between doing something with affection and doing something with a grouch or without care. If you practise all devotional activities with love and affection, with enthusiasm, then immeasurable strength will come to your heart. You will feel great happiness in your mind and heart, then you will not have to be told to do service any more—you will run and grab it yourself. Then service will become your very life. You will not be able to live without

service. Those who will attend this annual festival’s programmes with enthusiasm, following all rules and regulations, will see how much strength will come to their hearts. This is not some empty words, if you try it yourself, you will be able to see it. The Lord and His dear associate, Śrī Gurudev, can see this festival.

Bhāvāgrāhī Janārdan is pleased with the loving service of devotees

The Lord is *antaryāmī* (all-knowing), just think about it. You cannot cheat Him. Lotus-eyed Jagannāth sees everything with His big eyes. How can you cheat Him? He wants your love. No matter how much you may be doing, He will not see it—He will see whether you are doing it with love or not. Seeing that love in you, He will bestow His service to you. Śrī Gurudev and the Lord see the enthusiasm and the love that one practices devotional activities with—when they see love in the practitioner, they get great joy. If you want to make your guru happy, you must serve the Lord with love and enthusiasm.

It is necessary to practise every single devotional practice with enthusiasm. There is a big difference between practising with apathy and with enthusiasm. “*Kṛṣṇa bhakti kaile sarva-karma kṛta haya*: by practising devotion to Kṛṣṇa, all other activities are automatically accomplished”—it is necessary to serve the Lord with such faith. Depending on one’s qualification, there are *kaniṣṭha-*, *madhyam-* and *uttam-adhikārī* devotees. This is the only difference or gradation among practitioners. When one attains perfection, they are called *uttama-bhāgavata*.

Difference between qualified and unqualified devotees based on one’s faith

Those who have a strong faith are called *uttama-adhikārī*. One does not become an *uttam-adhikārī* based on the amount of

time, i.e. by merely practising for a longer time. It is necessary to see what kind of faith one practises with. Qualified is the one whose faith has become strong. When one becomes disposed to the service of Kṛṣṇa through devotional practice, the more faith they have, the higher their qualification is. Practising for more or less time does not make any difference in one's qualification. If devotees have equal faith, then those who give more time to practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness will have a higher qualification, or right. This is an astonishing truth. It is so easy to recognise one's qualification or lack of it by this. If you do not have a strong faith, then when the time of examination comes, your true fickleness will come out.

*“śāstra-yukto sunipuṇa, dṛḍha śraddhā yāra
‘uttama ādhikārī’ sei tāraye samsāra”*

“One who is expert in logic, argument and the revealed scriptures and who has firm faith in Kṛṣṇa is considered a topmost devotee. He can deliver the whole world.”

(Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, 2.22.65)

Being firm means having faith that if I practise śravaṇ and kirtan, I will definitely get devotion. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is happy through that. This is what is called a strong faith.

*‘śraddhā’-śabde—viśvāsa kahe sudṛḍha niśchaya
krṣṇe bhakti kaile sarva-karma krta haya*

“Śraddhā is firm, determined faith that by service to Kṛṣṇa all actions are accomplished.”

(Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, 2.22.62)

“Dhairyāt” (patience) means—“I practise with enthusiasm, with firm faith, but still I do not get any perfection in my hands,”—if you think in this way and become fickle, then the result of your devotional practice is destroyed.

Patience comes from strongest faith

“Whether in this lifetime, or next lifetime, or a hundred lifetimes later, but I will get the Lord”—patience comes from such firm faith. Śrīman Mahāprabhu taught the souls of this world with the example of His own close associate Śrī Mukunda Prabhu. Śrī Mukunda was Mahāprabhu’s singer. Mahāprabhu felt immense joy hearing Śrī Mukunda’s *kīrtan*. One day, Śrī Mahāprabhu ordered His other associates, “From today, My door is closed for Mukunda. This *khadajāṭhiyā* child goes to other *saṃpradāyas* and accepts them as the highest, he does not have strong faith that devotion is the highest path. I will not give him My *darśan* again!” When Mukunda heard that Mahāprabhu would not give His *darśan* to him any more, he became extremely dejected, but he kept thinking about Mahāprabhu. Through Śrīvās Ṭhākur he asked Mahāprabhu if he would get His *darśan* in any birth. Śrīman Mahāprabhu told him that he would get His *darśan* after one million births. Hearing this, Śrī Mukunda started dancing forgetting himself out of joy, “I will get it! I will get it! I will get it! I will get Mahāprabhu’s *darśan*!” He has the strongest faith in the words of Mahāprabhu. Even after a million of births, but he will get Mahāprabhu’s *darśan*—this firm faith did away with the million of births for him. Śrīman Mahāprabhu called Śrī Mukunda and accepted him again.

Patience is born from firm faith. Strong faith and patience are two religious principles that are neither different, nor contrary to each other.

“*Tat tat karma pravartanāt*”—the word ‘*karma*’ (action) does not mean the action that is done for enjoyment; it means devotional practices—*śravaṇ*, *kīrtan*, *vandana*, *archana*, etc. On the one hand, a practitioner must follow the devotional practices, but at the same time, a practitioner must also reject all forbidden unfavourable activities. If one is not careful about the forbidden

activities, it is very easy to stray from the path becoming attracted to unfavourable activities. Just as when you plant a tree, you must water and fertilise it and keep it in a suitable place, otherwise a cow or a goat can come and destroy it.

The meaning of life is to submit everything for the service of the Lord

There is a gross and subtle difference among prohibited activities or practices. The things that can be used for the service of the Lord (e.g. flowers, camphor, sandalwood, good edible items, etc.) are offered for the Lord's enjoyment—nobody can take them for their own enjoyment. That is why Vaiṣṇavs do not accept flowers, incense, camphor, etc. for themselves. Gold and precious metals are offered to the Lord, for His pleasure. Good products, items must be used for the service of the Lord. When something is offered to the Lordships, its intrinsic purpose is fulfilled. If you have enough money, you can make temples of the Lord, you can make temples of *Hari-kīrtan*, where devotees can assemble and chant the glories of the Lord. Then your money's purpose is fulfilled. If you have a large garden, if you have a large plot of land, serve the Lord with it. Do not use anything for your own enjoyment. Even when you see some good jewellery, you must remember about Śrī Rādhārāṇī—such beautiful ornaments are fit for Her, so offer it to Her.

At the same time, so much enjoyment must be also given up out of love for the Lord. If you do not take grains, etc. on the days of *ekūḍāśī*, it pleases the Lord, that is why devotees do not take rice on the fasting days of the Lord (*Hari-vāsar* days)—they do not even take the rice that comes as the Lord's *prasādam* on such days. When you give something up out of love for the Lord, your life becomes more meaningful.

We should have enthusiasm, we should be firm, and we should have patience. Not accepting prohibited items means

devotees of the Lord abstain from taking the items meant for the pleasure of the Lord for themselves.

“Saṅga-tyāgāt sato vṛtte”: those who pursue knowledge (*jñanīs*) stay far from inhabited places (they go to live in a cave, forest, jungle, etc.) and practise in seclusion, but devotees do not reject association in this way. Devotees reject the association of non-devotees.

**It is always advisable to leave the association of
māyāvādīs**

Do not give affection to that which opposes Śrī Gaurasundar or Śrī Śyāmasundar—devotees of Gaura and devotees of Kṛṣṇa do not associate with such people. If somebody is an impersonalist (*māyāvādī*)—if somebody says that the Deity of the Lord is illusory, does not believe in the eternal pastimes of the Lord, says that the Lord’s pastimes are illusory and a part of the material world—devotees always reject the association of such persons.

“māyāvādī saṅga yena nā haya kona kāle”

“May I never come in contact with an impersonalist.”



Eternal aspiration for the association of Śrī Guru and Vaiṣṇavs

At the same time, there is never a prohibition for taking the association of those who practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness and who teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness, i.e. *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru*,—on the contrary, their association is always aspired for. When someone bestows Hari-kathā onto me, when someone takes me from a wrong path and brings me to the right path, it is foolish to leave their association; scriptures do not tell us to do it. Do not leave the good association of Vaiṣṇavs, rather always engage yourself in congregational service (*saikīrtan*) together with many others.

“Ekākī āmāra nāhi pāya bala harināma saikīrtana—I do not get the strength to chant the Holy Name on my own.” When you chant the Holy Name together with others, it is then called *saikīrtan*. Therefore, when it is said that it is necessary to reject association, one must reject undevotional, or bad, association. There is no question of giving up good association. For a practitioner of devotion seclusion means keeping away from bad association. One must associate with Vaiṣṇavs as affectionately and sweetly as one associates with the near and dear members of their very own kin. Vaiṣṇavs' association makes devotion stronger, their association increases devotion. Suppose one person stays at home and worships Śrī Gaurasundar or Śrī Śyāmasundar; and another person practises Kṛṣṇa consciousness in devotees' association. The person who stays in the association of devotees will progress down the path of devotion very quickly. When you associate with somebody, it is certainly necessary to judge, “How

does this person whose association I am going to take, practise? Does the conception of this person go in line with the conception of my guru or not?" If the conception of the person does not correspond with the conception of your guru, then this person is not a member of your own kin. Even if the person is a Vaiṣṇav, if my spiritual objective does not correspond with theirs, I will never aspire for their intimate and close association. Association of such persons can cause a problem for your tender, newly-sprouted devotional mood.

The only duty of devotees is to leave the association of selfish workers, intellectuals, yogis and materialists

Householder devotees worship the Lord and chant the Holy name alone at home, but they do not get so much strength through such practice because of the lack of association. Therefore, if you can spend some time in the association of Vaiṣṇavs at a temple, you will see how much more strength you will get. However, if a renounced devotee stays alone practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness on his own, they will not get such strength through that. Affection means being loving—being loving to each other and being loving towards the worshippable. When such devotees gather together and practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they become even more joyful through that. Strangers (those who do not belong to one's own kin) are the *karmīs*, *yogīs* and *jñānīs*. They are unnecessary for devotees, and as for *viśayīs* (materialists), their association must be rejected.

tato duḥsaṅgam utsrjya satsu sajjeta buddhimān
santa evāsyā chhindanti mano-vyāsaṅgam uktibhiḥ

(Srimad Bhagavatam, 11.26.26)

"Therefore, intelligent people will leave bad association and keep good association. Through devotional guidance, such saintly persons cut off all unfavourable to devotion desires."

**Those who help you in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are your
closest kin**

Those who obstruct your Kṛṣṇa consciousness life may be called ‘relatives’ according to the judgement of this world, but they are not your real kin. Actually, if you leave their association, you will attain real benefit. Therefore, whenever householder devotees get such an opportunity, they should come to stay in the association of devotees and practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness together with them. If your son, daughter, wife, et. al. sincerely practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then their association is not evil—then they are your true friends. Those who can remove excessive attachment of your mind (i.e. material attachment) through their Hari-kathā are *prakṛta sādhus* (genuine saints). Always aspire for their association.

“*Sato vṛtteḥ*”—for their own life’s purification, practitioners of devotion (those who want to attain devotion) will accept the mood of those who have become devotees or those who are striving to become devotees. Whatever is necessary to collect to maintain one’s life (to provide for eating, going to the bathroom, clothing, etc.) is called livelihood. To earn this livelihood, different classes of people accept different kinds of occupations, but those who practise devotion are told not to take up inauspicious occupations, business, trade, etc. like those of the common people. Devotees maintain their life following the directive of the scriptures, and you must also sustain your life in this way.

**The body of a self-realised devotee is transcendental and
full of bliss, therefore it does not require any livelihood**

Those who have attained perfection (*siddhi*) do not need to strive for their livelihood; they do not make even a slightest attempt to earn any livelihood, because they are not disturbed

by the demands of a material body (sleeping, etc.). They do not pay any attention or interest towards material bodily actions to make their bodies transcendental—those who live in Vaikuṇṭha (transcendental world) make no attempt towards their bodily subsistence. They retain their body, but it is a transcendental form, it is fully cognisant and blissful.

prākṛta kariyā māne viṣṇu-kalevara
viṣṇunindā āra lāhi ihāra upara

“One who considers the transcendental body of Lord Viṣṇu to be made of material nature is the greatest offender at the lotus feet of the Lord. There is no greater blasphemy against the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 1.7.115)

The same is true about self-realised Vaiṣṇavs

In varying degrees of surrender, one may show little interest for livelihood, but that interest still remain to some extent. For as long as one does not attain perfection, one will still be making effort, to some extent, towards earning one's livelihood. If you have to earn your livelihood, how should you do it? You must earn your livelihood in the same way that sincere practitioners of devotion have done or are doing it. You must not follow the example of other materialistic people.

Renounced devotees sustain themselves on mādhukarī bhikṣā (alms)

Both householders and renounced practitioners of devotion have to maintain their lives by collecting something. If I am a renunciate, I have my guru at home—what is there for me to worry about? Śrī Gurudev will take care of everything for me. My guru takes all responsibility for me. When one is a practitioner, i.e. before attaining perfection, one needs food, clothes, sometimes

medicine if one is sick—and this is true for both householders and renunciates as well. Therefore, some effort to maintain one's body is always necessary. With that said, however, renounced devotees (who have left their house) do not maintain their life in the same way as materialists and fruitive workers do. You must accept the profession of a renounced practitioner in the same way that householder devotees accept a profession to earn their livelihood. Renunciates sustain themselves only on alms. If renounced devotees do not beg alms for the service of the Śrī Guru, then they are committing an offence of stealing Śrī Guru's wealth. Unless one begs alms, one becomes Śrī Hari-bhogī or Śrī Guru-bhogī (one becomes a user of the Lord or user of the Guru). For renounced devotees, any other occupation except for begging alms (*mādhukarī bhikṣā*) is prohibited. Agriculture, trade or government job is unacceptable for them. Many collect large amounts of money on pretext of service to the society and mankind, and use this money to procure their livelihood. This is not authorised by the scriptures. *Yogīs* approach rich people, and, inspiring them on the strength of their yoga powers, collect money from them and live on that. Unless renounced devotees are engaged by Śrī Gurudev in some other particular service, they must certainly go for collection. Those who do not want to go begging, must practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness staying at home and accepting the lifestyle of householder devotees without becoming Śrī Hari-bhogī or Śrī Guru-bhogī (enjoyers or users of the Lord and the guru). This will bring them benefit. Not to do service and to live off Śrī Guru or Śrī Hari is an offence. When you come to a householder's house to beg, you can be chastised, but through that your tolerance will increase, through that you will learn how to be humble. Perhaps, you were once very rich, but at present your only ego is that you are a servant of your guru. The scriptures prescribe no other engagement for those who leave their home and become servants of their guru. Only renunciates

must go for begging alms. You may not get much alms, but if you go out and go begging house to house without duplicity, it will make your guru happy. When you take obeisance and fame, you can display the cloth of a renunciate, but when you go out to beg you cannot bear walking in the sun. This will not do.

Taking up begging is completely inappropriate for householder devotees

How must householder devotees sustain their lives? It is not true that householders have no right to practise devotion. What should then be their occupation? They must maintain their livelihood in the same way that sincere practitioners do, following the processes authorised in the scriptures. Householder devotees have no right to collect alms—if they go on collection, they will fall down. If one has nothing to eat and dies, well and good, but a householder must never accept anything through begging. One can be a farmer, a merchant, a clerk, or a labourer—one can earn his livelihood through that. It is not prohibited for householders to take up clerical work, but this is a low occupation. You must not take up any job at a liquor shop, as a prostitute or earn money through rendering any other sinful services. For example, sometimes they add some adulterants to products to make addition profit, etc.—you must not get involved with such work. Agriculture is quite pure. Householder devotees must earn honest money in a clean way and use it for the service of the Lord. It is unacceptable for the practitioners of devotion to become leeches and live off others.

When unavoidable, female devotees must earn their living on the order of their guru

What will be the occupation of all the female practitioners in Kṛṣṇa consciousness? They must practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness

depending on their father or husband. This is the directive of the scriptures. However, at present time, the environment has changed so much that female devotees often have to struggle a lot. Nowadays, many ladies become self-sufficient and independent and earn their own living working in an office, etc. It often happens that the environment at their father's or husband's house turns out to be unfavourable to the practice of devotion. In such cases, they can take permission from their guru and, following his advice, earn their own livelihood.



Śrī Śrī Rūpa Goswāmīpād’s Śiksāmrta (Nectar of Instruction)

Begging for the mercy of the holy lotus feet of Śrī Śrīla *Guru-varga*, we hear some instructions of Śrī Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād on the occasion of the annual Hari-smaraṇ festival at Śrī Puruṣottam Math.

gurupāda-āśrayas tasmāt kṛṣṇa-dīkṣādi-śikṣaṇam
viśrambheṇa guroḥ sevā sādhu-vartmānu-vartanam
saddharmaprchchhā bhogādi-tyāgaḥ kṛṣṇasya hetave
nivāsyे dvārakādau cha gaṅgāderapi sannidhau
vyavahāreṣu sarveṣu ṣāvadarthānuvartitā
hari-vāsara-sammāno dhātryaśvatthādigauravam
eṣāmatra daśāṅgānāṁ bhavet prārambharūpatā

“Limbs of devotional practice: (1) taking shelter at the holy lotus feet of Śrī Guru; (2) receiving the mantra initiation from the guru and all necessary instructions regarding the world, the objective, and the means of attaining the objective; (3) serving the guru with firm faith; (4) striving to practise following the example of saintly persons; (5) being eager to learn the conception of the saintly persons; (6) giving up one’s own happiness out of love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa; (7) residing in a holy place; (8) accepting only what is necessary for life; (9) observing Ekādaśī; (10) honouring holy dhatri and asvattha trees. These ten devotional practices are observed by the practitioners from the beginning of their spiritual life.”

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī Prabhu is a world guru, if you properly accept his nectar of instruction, you will inevitably get the benefit

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād is a world guru. He has described very clearly what practices practitioners of Kṛṣṇa consciousness must perform in their daily life and he has invited everyone to come and hear about it. But for all these instruction and guidance of the great souls, whimsical interpreters would follow Śrīman Mahāprabhu's instruction in any way they fancy. Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād is a world guru, therefore he warns that one must watch out that Śrīman Mahāprabhu's teaching is not preached in a distorted way.

ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhу-saṅgo 'tha bhajana-kriyā
tato 'nartha-nivṛttiḥ syāt tato niṣṭha ruchis tataḥ
athāsaktis tato bhāvas tataḥ premābhyaudāṣchatī
sādhakānām ayam premṇaḥ prādurbhāve bhavet kramāḥ

"In the beginning there is faith, then good association, then practising life. After that, the offences gradually go away, faith becomes stronger, taste comes, then attachment, then there arises affection and love. This is how love to God comes to those who practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

(*Sri Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu*, 1.4.15-16)

Development of spiritual practice

First there is faith, from faith comes good association, from there practising life. After that, offences gradually go away, faith becomes stronger, then taste comes, then attachment—up to this is the practice of devotion, and after that there gradually arises affection and divine love. This is how divine love for the Lord comes to those who practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrī Gurudev is the very own associate of Śrī Gaurasundar—firmness in such faith is called taking shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Guru

Those who possess firm faith take exclusive shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Guru and start practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness following his guidance.

“kṛṣṇa se tomāra, kṛṣṇa dite pāra
tomāra śakti āchhe”

Those disciples who do not have such strong faith in Śrī Guru merely take the mantra but they do not truly accept the guru. “I am fallen, I am full of unwanted habits and elements, I am entangled in the net of various material desires, but my Śrī Gurudev is capable of removing all this and rescue me”—if I cannot keep such faith in somebody, then I should not accept such person as my guru. “Śrī Gurudev is Kṛṣṇa’s dearmost associate, he is Śrī Gaurasundar’s very own associate, he is capable of anything”—if you have such faith in somebody, you must accept them as your guru. “What is devotion? How does one become devoted? I am a baby in these matters, but he knows everything. If I do not take his shelter, I will lose out spiritually”—those who think in this way are qualified to take shelter. Taking shelter means “I have offered everything I have at your lotus feet. From today there is nothing left of my own.”

ātma-nivedana, tuyā pade kari
hainu parama sukhī
duḥkha dūre gela chintā nā rahila
 chaudike ānanda dekhi

“I have surrendered myself at your feet and have become extremely happy now. All my sadness is gone and there is no worry left. I see joy in all four directions.”

A surrendered practitioner first becomes initiated into a mantra and receives instruction from Śrī Gurudev. This is called the lotus feet of Śrī Guru. Shelter means to sell oneself to his holy feet. “I will be rescued through the mantra he has given me—it will remove all my *anarthas* and let me enter the transcendental kingdom”—it is necessary to chant the Holy Name with this type of strong faith. If one only received the mantra, it does not mean that everything is attained. Receiving the mantra means only the beginning of shelter. From today, Śrī Gurudev has taken all responsibility for me. He does not take such responsibility for everyone in this world; he takes such responsibility only for his disciples. For example, if a man loves a woman, he does not take all responsibility for her—but when two people get married and established marital relationship, then their sense of responsibility grows for each other. Similarly, by giving me initiation into the mantra, my Śrī Gurudev has taken the responsibility to rescue me.

**If you take initiation and accept the teaching and
instruction of Śrī Gurudev, then your real spiritual
practice begins**

Therefore, after initiation, true spiritual practice, true teaching (*śikṣā*) begins. A disciple can place a certain demand on their Śrī Guru, and Śrī Gurudev from his side also accepts responsibility for his disciple. Has one become initiated? Has one become educated? Teaching (*śikṣā*) means accepting the order or ruling of Śrī Gurudev, it means living by following his order. If I do not come to Śrī Gurudev, if I do not hear his lectures, if I do not follow what he says—I may have taken initiation ten years ago, I have been chanting the Holy Name—will I not get devotion? No, you will not progress on the path of devotion because you have never accepted the teachings from your Śrī Gurudev. When you learn the conception from Śrī Gurudev, you must live your life

following his instruction, then you will get the result. Suppose by bad fortune your Śrī Gurudev disappears, or he stay in a far away place and you do not get any opportunity to come to him—in such case you must learn the conception from an instructing guru (*śikṣā-guru*). The instructing guru must also belong to your own kin—if such a *śikṣā-guru* manifests in your life, then you must learn the conception from them.

“tasmai deyarī tato grāhyam”

“A person dear to the Lord should be given respect even if he is born in a low family, and whatever he offers should be accepted.”
(*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, 10.127)

When the initiating guru disappears, one must certainly accept an instructing guru (*śikṣā-guru*), otherwise a boat floating in the ocean of material existence that does not have a helmsman will inevitably sink.

**dadāti pratigṛhnāti guhyam ākhyāti pṛchchhati
bhuṅkte bhojayate chaiva ṣaḍ-vidham prīti-lakṣaṇam**

“Offering gifts in charity, accepting charitable gifts, revealing one’s mind in confidence, inquiring confidentially, accepting prasādam and offering prasādam are the six symptoms of love shared by one devotee and another.”

(*Śrī Upadeśāmṛta*, 4)

Śrī Gurudev is your very own. If you tell him about your fault or shortcomings, he will not hate you. He will try to correct you, and he holds you very close to his heart, he will not be able to leave you. “Everything I have has come to me by the mercy of my Śrī Gurudev, but I do not want to give anything to him, I do not want to serve him! Śrī Gurudev has many disciples, and if I do not give him something in service, what is the big deal?”—if you have such mentality, it is inauspicious. He is giving you transcendental things, and what are you giving to him? You are a pauper! What do you have? Still, you can worship the Ganga

with the water from the Ganga—in the same way, whatever small wealth, etc. he accepts, he does so out of mercy for you. You do not need to show any duplicity in the service to your Śrī Gurudev.

Gurudev is a member of Kṛṣṇa's family

The Lord's family is in Vaikuṇṭha. There, He knows no want of enjoyment and pleasure—that plane provides all possible ingredients required for His pleasure. You want to save yourself from the harassment of the illusion, and the Lord also wants to save you and use you for His own enjoyment—He wants to increase His enjoyment by recruiting you. His thirst for enjoyment is unlimited, that is why He wants to enjoy together with everyone. He is a terrible enjoyer. How much can you enjoy? How much is your capacity to enjoy? He can enjoy in an unlimited way through His senses. Therefore, He wants everyone to become His objects of enjoyment. But all gaps are full of dirt and impurity. It is necessary to fill in the gaps, otherwise one cannot enter Vaikuṇṭha, otherwise one cannot be used for service. Kṛṣṇa resides with His family in Vaikuṇṭha (a world without limitation), and you reside in Sakuṇṭha (a limited world). Yet, the Lord resorts to an amazing trick, or deception, for you—that trick is Gurudev. The Lord sends Gurudev from Vaikuṇṭha into the material world, and through him He creates His own family within the mortal plane. In this way, Gurudev or a great soul starts Kṛṣṇa's family in this material world and recruits others into this family. The Lord does not tell His devotees, "Go and make your own family"—no, He says, "Go there and start My family there." Therefore, Gurudev makes the family of Kṛṣṇa—by the desire of Kṛṣṇa, on His order. Kṛṣṇa is his eternal spouse, therefore he pours in all sorts of offerings onto Kṛṣṇa and makes Him happy in this way. Therefore, Gurudev says, "We are making Kṛṣṇa's family and collecting fuel for His

enjoyment. Come inside!” Only a great guru can create a family of Kṛṣṇa. Bhajanānandī gurus practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness on their own. The secluded practice they engage in is not wrong. For them, it is quite right, but what can common *jīva* souls bound by the illusory world get from them? What is such guru doing to make everyone enter the family of Kṛṣṇa? Such gurus do nothing for the common *jīva* souls, whereas mahānta gurus give many souls an opportunity to serve the Lord and can rescue them from their inauspicious state (can remove their anarthas). Gurudev can live alone and practise on his own, but he makes all these arrangements to give *jīva* souls an opportunity to engage in the service of the Lord. It does not mean that practising remembrance or the chanting of the Holy Name does not give any result, no, but Gurudev has opened a service factory to give many people an opportunity to engage in service; as a result, many people can enter the family of Kṛṣṇa.

You chant the Holy Name, you practise *kirtan*, but what result will you get unless you enter Kṛṣṇa’s family? It is quite necessary to enter it. That is why Gurudev calls everyone, “Come, come! Come to my family. Unless you come here, unless you enter the family of Kṛṣṇa, your anarthas (unwanted elements) will never go away, even if you every day chant millions of Holy Names with offences. Chanting the Holy Name with offences will not take you far—many in this world chant the Holy Name, but do they get the result? Can you get to Vaikuṇṭha only by chanting the Holy Name? If you enter Gurudev’s family and serve the house of the guru, you can very quickly become perfect and progress towards your goal.

Trade secret of Kṛṣṇa consciousness

“I will not live in the Guru’s family. I will only take from my guru.” This is not right. You have got a lot from your Gurudev,

but unless you serve the house of your Gurudev, you will not get any result. So, come. Come, enter the family of Gurudev. Gurudev performs *mahā-saṅkīrtan* (grand *sankirtan*), *mahā-archan* (grand worship), *mahā-parikramā* (grand circumambulation of the holy places). Connect with him and all the unwanted elements within your heart (*anarthas*) will go away. If you can, by hook or by crook, give your mind and heart to the service of your Guru, you will get supreme benefit.

Great gurus have come to you, come and get employed at their service factory. If you want to become an employee at his factory, Gurudev can give you employment. Unless you take part in that service (*sevā-yajña*), unless you serve the house of the Guru, you will not get any particular benefit. Śrī Gaurasundar has told us this. Following His desire, following His inspiration, I am speaking now about this sacred mystery of spiritual practice. Everyone should from now engage themselves in the service of the guru—you must all serve your guru with your body, mind, speech, intelligence, in whatever capacity that you can; you will no doubt receive benefit. In spiritual life, all problems can go away within a second. You can get perfection in this very life.



All Glory to Sri Sri Guru Gauranga

Pure devotion and its practice

Just as most worshippable Śrīla Sūta Goswāmīpād described the steps of devotion to the sixty thousand *r̄ṣis* in Naimiṣāraṇya—in the same way, Śrīla Jīva Goswāmīpād revealed the stages of devotees. It is very important for those who want to practise pure devotion, to hear about the levels of devotional practice in sequence. It does not take long to hear about the practice of devotion, but it does take a long time to practise it. When you start practising exclusive devotion, or devotion that has nothing to do with the material world (*niṣkiṣchanā-bhakti*), then there is no necessity to practise any other process. You do not have to make any separate attempt to practise religion, knowledge, renunciation, etc. because exclusive devotion can give all perfection without resorting to the shelter of religiosity, knowledge, renunciation, etc. Practice of religiosity, knowledge, yoga and renunciation can give the *jīva* soul some material happiness, and such practice can take one up to perfections (*siddhi*), but all this enjoyment and liberation cannot bring ultimate happiness to the soul. At the same time, many come to practise devotion, but actually they desire enjoyment, liberation. Then we can understand that such practitioners have not got the qualification, or the right, to practise devotion. It is not necessary to practise pure devotion for the sake of gaining such petty things. Devotion should be practised out of love for the Lord. All we need to do is to awaken the love for the Lord in our hearts.

Love for the Lord is our aspiration, it is the main result of practising devotion. When one decides to practise exclusive

devotion, what should be the first step? To proceed on this path of pure devotion, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* gave the first regulation: it is necessary to listen to Kṛṣṇa-kathā, it is necessary to speak Kṛṣṇa-kathā, to worship the Lord eternally with exclusive attention. Every moment belongs to Kṛṣṇa. We must submerge, plunge our whole being into loving service to Kṛṣṇa, into the thoughts of His happiness. There is no question of rest in the practice of exclusive devotion—it is necessary to do one thing after another to show your love to Kṛṣṇa.

taṣmād ekena manasā bhagavān sātvatāṁ patiḥ
śrotavyaḥ kīrtitavyaś cha dhyeyaḥ pūjyaś cha nityadā

“With one-pointed attention, one should constantly hear about, glorify, remember and worship the Personality of Godhead, who is the protector of the devotees.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 1.2.14)

Śrīla Jīva Goswāmīpād composed *Śrī Śrī Bhakti-sandharbha*, and there he included this wonderful *śloka* from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* that was spoken by Śrīla Sūta Goswāmī. Practitioners must make a necklace from this *śloka* and wear it on their necks because the main principle of exclusive devotion is resounding within this *śloka*. To hear about Śrī Kṛṣṇa, to speak about Śrī Kṛṣṇa, to meditate on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and to worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa with undivided attention—we must imbibe these words. Everybody has the right to practise this exclusive devotion. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is an abode of all *rasa* (devotional love), He is the object of love for all of us. How can you have no right to love Him whom you love? The eternal true religion of the *jīva* soul is the religion of love. He is the object of everyone's love. Just as all living souls have the right to enjoy the sunshine, but you must pay a tax to enjoy electric light. Those who are poor often do not get a chance to enjoy electric light. Those who do not want to love the only object of love, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are very unfortunate. This is a conditioned and unnatural

state of the *jīva* soul. Having got into such unnatural state, the soul is only struggling to keep afloat in the ocean of material existence. If you start to practise fruitive activities, pursue knowledge, mystic powers, and so on, this question “Are you qualified or not?” will block your path. If I practise *karma* (do something for material gain), it means I want to have a flawless health and a lot of money. If I practise knowledge, I want to have sharp intelligence and genius. If I practise yoga, I want a hard, regulated life illumined by renunciation. However, if you want to practise devotion to Kṛṣṇa, you can practise it even if you have none of the things above. Rich, poor, sinners, sufferers, scholars, fool, meat-eaters, *brāhmaṇas*, Indians, Americans, Russians—in a word, everyone can listen to, speak, and remember Kṛṣṇa-kathā, all it takes is the desire to do it. Another form of exclusive devotion is Kṛṣṇa-toṣaṇa, satisfaction of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Unless you bring happiness to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, you cannot bring ultimate happiness to your soul. It is necessary to realise this. Following *varṇāśrama-dharma*, practising *karma*, *jñāna*, yoga, renunciation does not bring ultimate happiness to the soul because how much satisfaction of Lord Kṛṣṇa is there in selfish activities, in knowledge-seeking and renunciation? It is mostly satisfaction of one’s own senses. Besides, *karma*, *jñāna*, renunciation can give enjoyment, liberation, but they cannot give the highest religion (pure love for Lord Kṛṣṇa). When *karma*, *jñāna*, and renunciation are mixed with devotion, they can save one from the hands of Māyā, because there is some small amount of satisfaction of the Lord in it; but the distinctive characteristic of exclusive devotion is the wealth of divine love. You cannot get the sole object of your love, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, through *karma*, *jñāna*, or renunciation. If the *jīva* soul’s eternal relationship with Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has not awokened, there is nothing that can bring happiness to the soul. The Universal Supersoul, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, has a relationship with the *jīva* soul. *Kṛṣṇa-prema* (divine love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa) is the

highest, topmost wealth of the *jīva* soul. The method of attaining this wealth of divine love is the practice of exclusive devotion. When this eternal relationship with Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa awakens, the soul attains great happiness.

sa vai pūṁśāṁ paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaituky apratihatā yayātmā suprasīdati

“The supreme religion for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self.”

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 1.2.6)

If a practitioner of exclusive devotion does not notice their soul getting happiness, it means that their spiritual practising life is lax. Attainment of Kṛṣṇa-prema and great happiness in one's soul are the two symptoms by which you can tell whether you are progressing on the path of devotion or not.

vāsudeve bhagavati bhakti-yogaḥ prayojitaḥ
janayaty āśu vairāgyam jñānam cha yad ahaitukam

“By rendering devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one immediately acquires causeless knowledge and detachment from the world.”

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 1.2.6)

Devotion as such is self-sufficient, but *karma*, *jñāna*, renunciation rely on devotion—if there is no devotion to the Lord mixed in them, they do not bring any result. But because there is some devotion to the Lord mixed in and there is some concomitant satisfaction of the Lord in it in, then many days later the result of those activities will bring you to the door of devotion. Satisfaction of the Supreme Lord is not possible at the door of knowledge and renunciation.

It is clear now: if you are to practise exclusive devotion, you must hear about the Lord, speak about the Lord, remember the

Lord. Hearing and chanting (practising) comes through such spiritual discourses about the Lord. Now, the question is, "Where can we get such discourses?" The answer to this question is this: except for the devotees who have transcendental love for Lord Kṛṣṇa, nobody can speak Kṛṣṇa-kathā. Even liberated souls cannot bring this Kṛṣṇa-kathā within the gross material world. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's devotees who have divine love experience, by His mercy, the joy of such discourses. Śrī Kṛṣṇa overwhelms His loving devotees with such joy. Becoming immersed in the ocean of joy of transcendental discourses, devotees condemn liberation (Mukti) as a witch. Except for devotees, nobody can know Kṛṣṇa. Even Śrī Vedavyās did not reveal Kṛṣṇa in a way that would make Him known fully until one got the mercy of a devotee. By the mercy of Devarṣi Śrī Nārada, he allowed those whose hearts are overcome with devotion to get a glimpse of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Thereafter, at the top of his voice, he told all residents of the universe about Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the object of the soul's love. He also said that it is impossible to know Him fully except through devotion. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself says in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* (9.34, 18.66):

man-mana bhava mad-bhakto, mad-yaji mam namaskuru
mam evaisyasi yuktvaivam, atmanam mat-parayananah

"Always think of Me, be my devotee, always worship Me and offer obeisances to Me. Thus offering yourself to Me and taking refuge in Me, you will come to Me."

sarva-dharman parityajya, mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo, moksayisyami ma suchah

"Give up all kinds of religion and surrender to Me alone. I will liberate you from all sins, do not despair."

He looked at Arjuna and spoke this advice to the entire humankind of the universe. We can see in this mortal world that when we love somebody with all our heart and soul, we do not hesitate to leave everything for them, to reject and trample all

prohibited obstacles under our feet—all for the sake of union with the object of our love. The same is true for the spiritual world as well. When devotees know Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the only object of love and fully accept Him within their hearts, then they do not hesitate to sacrifice everything for Him. Without any reservation in their hearts, following the feelings of their hearts, the pull of their love for Kṛṣṇa, they dedicated everything—body, mind, soul—to His feet. Nobody except for devotee saints who possess divine love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, can know this object of love or awaken the eternal relationship with Him. Even no scriptures can know Him. In the scriptures about the Supreme Lord, there is a description of the object of love. If you read and hear such scriptures in the association of devotees, they will awaken your relationship with Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and make the sun of divine love arise in your heart.

satāṁ prasaṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido
bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ
taj-joṣāṇād āśv apavarga-vartmani
śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati

“In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then real devotion and devotional service begin.”
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 3.25.25)

Knowledge and renunciation do not make devotion to Kṛṣṇa or love for Kṛṣṇa arise in one's heart—this is the axiomatic truth realised by great souls. Worship and relationship with the Lord arise by the mercy and association of loving devotees.

Lord Kṛṣṇa becomes pleased even through small things: if you can hear and speak Kṛṣṇa-kathā taking shelter of the Lord

and taking association of devotees, then He will definitely give Himself to you. Realising that 'I belong to Kṛṣṇa', if you always serve Him and His devotees, if you always listen and speak about Him, He becomes totally subdued by that. If a *jīva* soul can bring such a chord or link into its conception and practising life, then it will run towards Kṛṣṇa. Pure *bhakti-yoga* is the method of knowing Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar gave much importance to the association of devotees and *śravaṇa-kīrtan*. When a *jīva* soul always hears and speaks about the Lord, the Lord becomes confined within the heart of such a *jīva* soul.

śrīvatāṁ sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ punya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ
hṛdy antaḥ stho hy abhadraṇi vidhunoti suhṛt satām

"Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Supersoul in everyone's heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge to hear His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted."

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 1.2.17)

sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt
"As soon as one attentively and submissively hears the message of Bhāgavatam, by this culture of knowledge the Supreme Lord is established within his heart."

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 1.1.2)

Therefore, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, "If you can speak about Me with devotion, I very quickly become pleased by that. If you speak about My glories in the association of devotees, I get so much pleasure—nobody on this human planet can give me such happiness."

nāham tiṣṭhāmi vaikuṇṭhe yoginām hṛdaye na cha
mad-bhaktāḥ yatra gāyanti tatra tiṣṭhāmi nārada

"Nārada, I am not in Vaikuṇṭha nor in the hearts of the yogīs. I reside where My devotees engage in glorifying My activities."

Vaikuṇṭha is a place of Deity worship (*archan*), there is only pūjā, there is no *kīrtan*. Yogīs reside there in meditation, whereas devotees are filled with ecstasy of *kīrtan*. *Kīrtan* is the very source of life for devotees. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *priya-śravā*, He likes listening, He is the best listener, therefore if you hear and speak about His glories, He becomes pleased very quickly. This is the trade secret. This secret is revealed by the personal energy of the Lord. In *rāga-mārga* practice, *kīrtan* is the shelter. Cowherd boys in Vṛndavan cried in separation from their dearmost Śrī Kṛṣṇa—distraught, they would chant about His glories and pastimes—through their singing, they would call the Lord. Everybody calls out to the beloved ones. In the entire three worlds, there is no one who can be as dear to one as Kṛṣṇa. When *jīva* souls always stay in the good association of pure devotees, this experience of loving closeness can arise in their hearts. To love Him means to hear about Him, to speak about Him, to meditate on Him. It is not necessary to hear about so many rules and principles—it is necessary to have a firm resolve to follow this path. When you establish relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and loving devotion comes, then you will get taste for the discourse about Him. Unless this taste or attachment comes, nobody can follow this path. That is why Bhakta-rāj Śrī Prahlāda Mahārāj cried, “Such a poor person as myself has no taste for Your sweet *kathā*. How will I get You?”

If you have not got taste for Hari-kathā in the association of pure devotees, you will not be able to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness continuously, at every moment. It is necessary to have a great fortune if you want to spend your life in the shelter of Hari-kathā. If you take shelter of Kṛṣṇa-kathā within your heart, you become qualified for genuine devotion—when this comes, no low desires will again arise in your life. When *jīva* souls worship the Lord and hear the discourses about the Lord in devotees' association, they mould their devotional natures. Then they get the seed of devotional creeper.

This seed of devotion actually means satisfying the Lord. By the mercy of pure saintly persons, devotees should water this seed with the water of śravan and *kīrtan* (hearing and chanting)—then their taste for the discourses about Kṛṣṇa will grow day by day. When the taste comes, you will be able to easily progress on the path of devotion. Hari-kathā is the embodiment of the life force of devotees—when this taste comes, your vision will not go to any other place. To bring out such devotional character, it is not necessary to go to school, to practise *karma*, *jñāna*, renunciation, etc.—such qualifications do not bring the right for devotion. If you have no taste for Hari-kathā, then all your erudition, wealth, followers, renunciation, etc. are useless; whereas if you have taste for Hari-kathā, then you can climb the wish-fulfilling tree of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa following the steps of practising devotion, affectionate devotion, loving devotion (*sādhana-bhakti*, *bhāva-bhakti*, *prema-bhakti*). The root that the love for Kṛṣṇa springs from, is good association (*sādhu-saṅga*).

**kṛṣṇa-bhakti-janma-mūla haya ‘āadhu-saṅga’
kṛṣṇa-prema janme, tēho punah mukhya aṅga**

“Sādhu-sanga, good association, is what the devotion to Kṛṣṇa is ultimately born from; even when the highest love for Kṛṣṇa is born, good association remains a principle part of the devotee’s life.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.22.80)

Manifestation of the Lord and His devotion

The Supreme Personality of Godhead enjoys His eternal transcendental pastimes through His internal potency (*svarūpa-sakti*). Being causelessly merciful towards *jīva* souls, He performs His transcendental pastimes within the material world, which are transcendental to the three modes of material nature by the influence of His inconceivable internal potency and therefore exist eternally. However, materialists claim that these *svarūpa-*

śakti pastimes of the playful Lord are an outcome of the Lord's external illusory potency—such people commit offences at the lotus feet of the Lord and remain cheated out of relishing the sweetness of the Lord's pastimes. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has censured such imaginary conception when He was talking to Arjuna—He says in *Śrī Gītā* (9.11-12):

avajānanti mām mūḍha, mānuṣīṁ tanum āśritam
param bhāvam ajānanto, mama bhūta-maheśvaram
moghāśā mogha-karmāṇo, mogha-jñānā vichetasah
rākṣasīṁ āsurīṁ chaiva, prakṛtiṁ mohinīṁ śritāḥ

"Not knowing the transcendental nature of My form of human features, ignorant persons blaspheme Me, the Supreme Lord of all beings, considering Me a mere mortal. Their hopes, acts, knowledge and thoughts all in vain, such persons acquire the ignorant and demoniac nature, which leads to their downfall."

Śrī Śrīman Mahāprabhu personally declared that the highest and the only attainment of a living soul is loving service to the Supreme Lord Himself, Vrajendra-nandan Śrī Kṛṣṇa. When Śrīman Mahāprabhu wanted to glorify this to Śrī Rūpa Goswāmīpād, He said,

eito parama phala parama puruṣārtha
yāra āge tṛṇa-tulya chāri puruṣārtha

"To taste the fruit of devotional service in Goloka Vṛndāvan is the highest perfection of life, and in the presence of such perfection, the four material perfections—religion, economic development, sense gratification and liberation—are very insignificant achievements."

(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, 2.19.168)

abhidheya-nāma 'bhakti', 'prema'—prayojana
puruṣārtha-śiromāṇi prema mahā-dhana
kṛṣṇa-mādhurya sevānanda prāptira kāraṇa
kṛṣṇa-sevā kare, kṛṣṇa-rasa āsvādana

“Devotional service, or satisfaction of the Lord, is called abhidheya because it can develop one’s original love of Godhead, which is the goal of life. This goal is the living entity’s topmost interest and greatest wealth. Thus one attains the platform of transcendental loving service unto the Lord. When one attains the transcendental bliss of an intimate relationship with Kṛṣṇa, he renders service to Him and tastes the mellows of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.19.125-126)

Divine love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the highest goal of life, the only practice is pure devotion that is situated beyond the three modes of material nature. In this regard, Śrī Śrīman Mahāprabhu told Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī:

anya-vāṣchhā, anya-pūjā chāḍī’ jñāna’, ‘karma’
 ānukūlye sarvendriye kṛṣṇānuśilana
 ei śuddha-bhakti—ihā haite premā haya
 paṣcharātre, bhāgavate ei kathā kaya

“A pure devotee must not cherish any desire other than to serve Kṛṣṇa. He should not offer worship to the demigods or to mundane personalities. He should not cultivate artificial knowledge, which is devoid of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he should not engage himself in anything other than Kṛṣṇa conscious activities. One must engage all one’s purified senses in the service of the Lord. This is the favourable execution of Kṛṣṇa conscious activities. These activities are called śuddha-bhakti, pure devotional service. If one renders such pure devotional service, he develops his original love for Kṛṣṇa in due course of time. In Vedic literatures like the Paṣcharātras and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, these symptoms are described.

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.19.168-169)

Distinctive peculiarity of the practice of pure devotion that was revealed by Śrī Śrīman Mahāprabhu, is that this devotion is unalloyed—there are no aspects of the practices of fruitive activities, knowledge, yoga mixed in, and there are no desires for

enjoyment or liberation. The only process how this devotion is practised is to do what is favourable to pleasing Lord Kṛṣṇa with all your senses—the only desire in pure devotion is the desire to please the Lord. Such devotion to Kṛṣṇa, or love for Kṛṣṇa, is a manifestation of Hlādinī, Kṛṣṇa's internal potency. Describing the nature and form of devotion, Śrīla Jīva Goswāmīpād said in his *Śrī Bhāgavat-sandharbha*:

“paramasārabhūtāyāpi svarūpa-śakteḥ sāra-bhūtā hlādinī nāma
yā vṛttis tasyā era sāra-bhūto vṛtti viśeṣo bhaktih

(Śrī Paramātma-sandarbha, 13)

“When Hlādinī, a manifestation of the Lord’s highest omnipresent internal energy, descends within one’s propensity, it is then called devotion.”

The result of such *nirguṇā* devotion (a manifestation of devotion that is a play of the Lord's energy) is called divine love (*prema*). The only root cause of practising this *nirguṇā*, unlimited, materially impoverished (materially detached) devotion is the mercy of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. That is why Śrī Śrīman Mahāprabhu said,

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

“Having travelled throughout the universe and got the mercy of Guru, Krishna, a fortunate soul receives a seed of the devotional creeper.”

(Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya-lila, 19.151)

Here, the holy seed of the creeper of devotion means the seed of loving devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the main prerequisite of attaining loving devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. Śrīman Mahāprabhu laid a special emphasis on this because divine love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa is eternally present within Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, it does not stay anywhere else. That

is why without the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, there is no other way to attain such love. Śrīman Mahāprabhu told Śrī Sanātana Goswāmīpād:

kṛṣṇa-bhakti-janma-mūla haya ‘āadhu-saṅga’
kṛṣṇa-prema janme, tēho punaḥ mukhya aṅga

“Sādhu-sanga, good association, is what the devotion to Kṛṣṇa is ultimately born from; even when the highest love for Kṛṣṇa is born, good association remains a principle part of the devotee’s life.”
(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.22.80)

“mahat-kṛpā vinā kona karme ‘bhakti’ naya
kṛṣṇa-bhakti dūre rahu, saṁsāra nahe kṣaya

“Unless one is favoured by a pure devotee, one cannot attain the platform of devotional service. To say nothing of Kṛṣṇa-bhakti, one cannot even be relieved from the bondage of material existence.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 2.22.51)

If you practise devotion but do not give priority to the association of devotees, who are the dearest associates of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the result of such devotion is only enjoyment and liberation. If you follow the prescribed *varṇāśrama-dharma*, as a result of such karma, you will worship Lord Kṛṣṇa or pursue knowledge and renunciation—your heart will become cleansed, and after that you will try to attain devotion for Lord Kṛṣṇa—the result of all these activities mixed with the material mode of goodness is enjoyment, liberation; the benefit you get will stop at the point of *prema*, divine love; such activities cannot conquer the Lord. Śrīman Mahāprabhu did not care for any devotion that could not conquer Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We can see this from the conversation between Śrīman Mahāprabhu and Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda. When Śrīman Mahāprabhu requested Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda to explain the goal of practising life, the manifestation of devotion, Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda first said the

goal of practising life is *karma-miśrā* and *jñāna-miśrā bhakti* (devotion mixed with material pursuits, devotion mixed with the pursuit of knowledge), but Śrīman Mahāprabhu rejected it as being superficial. Then, Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda said, “*Jñāna-śūnyā bhakti sādhya-sāra*. The devotion without pursuit of knowledge is the highest practice.” To prove this, he quotes Brahmā’s words addressed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, recorded in *Śrīmad Bhagavatam*:

jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā namanta eva
jīvanti san-mukharitāṁ bhavadīya-vārtām
sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatāṁ tanu-vāṁ-manobhir
ye prāyaśo ‘jita jito ‘py asi tais tri-lokyām

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 10.14.3)

Brahmā told the Supreme Lord, “O Lord! When devotees leave aside all attempts to know Your impersonal form and surrender at Your holy lotus feet, when they live with the only purpose of hearing discourses about Your pastimes emanating from the mouths of saintly persons, and become firmly intent on following the footsteps of the saintly persons with their body, mind, and speech—then, even though You are known throughout the three worlds as unconquerable, You become conquered by such devotees.”

Giving up *karma* and *jñāna*, surrendering yourself and giving exclusive priority to hearing and speaking about the pastimes of the Lord, the Lord becoming conquered by such pure devotion and, as a result, getting the main benefit of exclusive devotion—Śrīman Mahāprabhu praised this kind of devotional practice and accepted the importance of this *śloka*. Therefore, one peculiarity of the exclusive devotion revealed by Śrīman Mahāprabhu is that practitioners of this kind of devotion do not care for any attempts to practise *karma*, *jñāna*, *vairāgya* (materially motivated activities, knowledge-seeking, and renunciation)—they take exclusive shelter in *sādhu-saṅga* (saintly association) and as a result of the

mercy that such association bestows, they surrender themselves and relish hearing and speaking about the pastimes of the Lord—gradually, they become unswerving in their practice, they become detached from material world, and attain attachment to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. When this attachment becomes intense, then divine love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa is born. Such loving devotees get nectarean service to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and attaining the perfection of divine love, they become extremely benefitted. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa also becomes attracted to their loving service—it conquers His heart.

There is one special peculiarity about attaining loving service to Śrī Vrajendranandan Śrī Kṛṣṇa—even if one attains divine love (*prema*), such service to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not attainable for those who have exclusive devotion in the line of *viddhi-mārga*. Those who aspire to take exclusive shelter of pure servitude, friendship, parenthood and consorthood that is found in Vraja within the realm of spontaneous devotion (*rāga-mārga*) and who are anxious to follow the mood of the residents of Vraja Dhām, who have spontaneous love for Kṛṣṇa; those who strive to render loving service to Vrajendra-nandan Śrī Kṛṣṇa—only such devotees have the right to attain transcendental loving service to Vrajendranandan Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Vrajendranandan Kiśor-śekhar Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the source of all His incarnations, He is the source of all religions established by His other incarnations; His youthful pastimes are the most attractive among all pastimes of His other forms and incarnations. The only associates of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in His nectarean adolescent pastimes are the young damsels of Vraja. Kiśor Śekhar Kṛṣṇa's unparalleled nectar of His beauty, nectar of His flute, and nectar of His pastimes, which had been described before, have one peculiarity—they are guided only by service hankering; the young girls of Vraja Dhām, the girlfriends of Śrī Kṛṣṇa render nectarean service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa out of love, following the feeling that come from their loving hearts. Among the Vraja-gopīs, the embodiment of the acme of divine love (*mahābhāv*) is

Śrī Rādhā Ṭhākuranī. Her loving service is such that it subdues Śrī Kṛṣṇa even more—the attraction of Her love is more than that of all the other *gopīs* of Vraja. That is why, Śrīman Mahāprabhu revealed in all of His teachings and pastimes that the hankering for loving service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who becomes subdued by the loving devotion of Śrī Rādhā, is the highest attainment for a *jīva* soul.

Those fortunate souls who exclusively follow Śrī Gauḍīya Gurupādpadma (an eternal associate of Śrī Svarūpa-Rupānuga and Śrī Rādhā), hanker for the service of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vraja Dhām following the path of spontaneous devotion—such souls are supremely benefitted. Inspiring the heart of Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda, Śrīman Mahāprabhu asked Him questions and answered them through His mouth, teaching thus fortunate souls this sacred divine love. In *Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* Śrīman Mahāprabhu asks Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda the following questions:

‘sādhyā-vastu’ ‘sādhana’ binā keha nāhi pāya
 kṛpā kari’ kaha, rāya, pābāra upāya
 rāya kahe,—yei kahāo, sei kahi vāṇī
 ki kahiye bhāla-manda, kichhui nā jāni
 mora mukhe vaktā tumi, tumi hao śrotā
 atyanta rahasya, śuna, sādhanera kathā
 rādhā-kṛṣṇera līlā ei ati gūḍhatara
 dāsyā-vātsalyādi-bhāve nā haya gochara
 sabe eka sakhlī-ganera ihā adhikāra
 sakhlī haite haya ei līlāra vistāra
 sakhlī vinā ei līlā puṣṭa nāhi haya
 sakhlī vinā ei līlāya anyera nāhi gati
 sakhlī-bhāve ye tāre kare anugati
 rādhā-kṛṣṇa-kuṣjasevā-sādhyā sei pāya
 sei sādhyā pāite āra nāhika upāya

“The goal of life cannot be achieved unless one practices the process. Now, being merciful upon Me, please explain that means by which this goal can be attained.”

Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya replied, "I do not know what I am saying, but You have made me speak what I have spoken, be it good or bad. I am simply repeating that message.

'Actually You are speaking through my mouth, and at the same time You are listening. This is very mysterious. Anyway, kindly hear the explanation of the process by which the goal can be attained. The pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are very confidential. They cannot be understood through the mellites of servitude, fraternity or parental affection. Actually, only the gopīs have the right to appreciate these transcendental pastimes, and only from them can these pastimes be expanded. Without the gopīs, these pastimes between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa cannot be nourished. Without the help of the gopīs, one cannot enter into these pastimes. Only one who worships the Lord in the ecstasy of the gopīs, following in their footsteps, can engage in the service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the bushes of Vṛndāvan. Only then can one understand the conjugal love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. There is no other procedure for understanding.'

(*Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, 2.8.196-205)

In His concluding pastimes, Śrīman Mahāprabhu stayed at the house of Śrī Kāśī Miśra (Gambhīrā, in Śrī Purī Dhām). Staying in seclusion, He revealed the pastimes of relishing the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa together with His intimate associates (Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodar, Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda, and several others). Becoming overwhelmed by Śrī Rādhā's mood of separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He would show the acme of relishing, internally and externally, the nectarean beauty, qualities, pastimes, sweetness of Kiśor Śekhar Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He would relish the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa being overwhelmed by the mood of girlfriends of Śrī Rādhā, that is the embodiment of the perfection for the practitioners who have taken shelter in the spontaneous devotion and hanker to relish loving service to Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa in Vraja. This is a necklace of instructions on the divine love of Śrī Svarūpa-Rūpānuga-Gauḍīya devotees. Remembering the supremely magnanimous

pastimes of Śrī Śaṅkaranāda Gaura Hari, the radiant and exalted form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa who comes to teach the *jīva* souls about divine love, Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmīpād prayed begging for His blessing for the fortunate residents of the world:

anarpita-charīm chirāt karuṇāyāvatīrṇah kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasāṁ sva-bhaktisriyam
hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandīpitah
sadā hrdaya-kandare sphuratu vah śachi-nandana

“May the Supreme Lord, who is known as the son of Sri Sachi Devi, be transcendently situated in the innermost core of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has descended in the age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what no incarnation has ever offered before: the most elevated mellow of devotional service, the mellow of conjugal love.”

Effect and peculiarity of association in the life of a *jīva* soul

There are two incarnations of mercy and magnanimity in this world—the saviour of the fallen, Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar, and Śrī Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, the Lord’s incarnation in the form of words. There is no other incarnation in this world that can be compared to them. Why are they called incarnations of great mercy? What sort of gift have they given? They have given one extremely wonderful and supra-mundane gift—the gift of association with the transcendental world. This is the greatest benediction upon this world. Association comes from love. If there is love, there is remembrance, and there is also association. Consciousness can feel association (connection) and joy. Matter is not conscious, therefore it cannot experience joy. By its constitution, consciousness always wants happiness. It is a natural propensity of consciousness to want association. Although consciousness always wants association, it is necessary to be wise when considering any association. The Lord says in Śrī Gītā, “*Samāgat samijāyate kāmaḥ*. From attachment, desire is born.”

When you have some attachment or come in connection with something, desires appear. What desires? Desire for happiness. When a *jīva* soul comes in connection with a particular nation, it imbibes the desires of that nation. When Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar taught about divine transcendental love, He would teach about the association between a devotee and the Lord. First is faith, then one comes to a devotee and a Deity of the Lord, becomes touched by that, then hears, glorifies and remembers the pastimes of the Lord in the association of devotees, then such spiritual association brings devotion. By listening to the narrations about the pastimes of the Lord, *jīva* souls get association of the Lord, they become touched. Therefore, Śrī Śrī Gaurasundar taught *jīva* souls the trick how to get this association through devotees and the Lord's pastimes, through hearing, practising, etc. Association binds the *jīva* soul, it liberates it and it gives it devotion. In conditioned state, the soul gets the association of the material world; in liberated state, the soul gets the association of the soul; and in the devoted state, the soul gets the association of the Lord. "Rasika-śekhara Kṛṣṇa parama karuṇā. Supremely jubilant Kṛṣṇa is most merciful." He always bestows an opportunity to relish the nectarean association of His associates and this gives joy to Him. There is ecstasy in association. Through association, one can relish joy. The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇachandra made His associates rejoice by allowing them to relish the sweetness of His own Name, beauty, qualities, and pastimes—by doing so, He Himself feels joy. These pastimes of relishing the nectar of association is going on eternally in Goloka.

Jīva souls are not material, they are conscious and separate expansions of the Supreme Lord. The Lord has three potencies—internal, external and marginal. *Jīva* souls come from His marginal potency—they are situated between the internal and external potencies. If a *jīva* soul wants to, it can take shelter of the internal potency of the Lord, or it can come in connection

with the material world, which comes from the external potency of the Lord. The marginal potency is different from the internal potency of the Lord and from His external potency. The Lord's eternal abode, eternal associates, and eternal pastimes come from His internal potency. The *jīva* souls who are charmed by illusory environment (*Māyā*) can neither see nor get the taste of these eternal pastimes in the material world. That is why the Lord performs pastimes in His various incarnations to bestow mercy upon the *jīva* souls of this material world. Why does the Lord come as mercy incarnate? To save the souls enchanted by *Māyā*. He does not come for the sake of the material world, or for the sake of a transformation of His internal potency—His incarnation in the material world is necessary to transform the *jīva* souls of His marginal potency. His function is to direct the *jīva* souls (infinitesimal eternal, conscious, and blissful transformations of the Lord's marginal potency) towards the search of their own happiness.

The function of the Lord's associates, who are transformations of the Lord's internal potency, is to practise God consciousness, i.e. live for the satisfaction of the Lord. *Jīva* souls are not internal potency of the Lord, they are conscious particles, they possess happiness. If there is no consciousness in some energy, there is no happiness in it as well. *Jīva* souls are conscious, so they are inclined to happiness; and this search for happiness takes *jīva* souls in two directions. Those entities whose happiness can go in two directions are called *taṭastha jīvas*. Those who go in one direction, who are particles of the Lord and glance at the happiness of the Lord, are the Lord's associates—these entities get happiness through the Lord's internal potency. Souls can experience connection with the Lord's energy, but the matter cannot. That is why we call the souls who come as our *guru-varga* “*chid-eka-rasa*” (spiritual). *Jīva* souls can take to two types of association, that is why they are called *jīva-śakti*, or *taṭastha-*

śakti. However, the only function, or religion, of *svarūpa-śakti* is to associate with the Lord. If a *jīva* soul wants to, it can get material pleasure, and it can also get spiritual happiness. This is the *jīva* soul who the Lord comes to bestow His mercy on. There is no need to bestow mercy on those who are extensions of the Lord's internal potency, neither is there a need to appear as an incarnation for them. Those souls are eternally happy. There is no potency of the Lord that comes to associate with the matter. *Jīva* souls hanker for association. Association can result in three states of a *jīva* soul. (1) When a *jīva* soul associates with the matter, it is a conditioned state. (2) When a *jīva* soul associates with itself (with the soul), it is a liberated state. (3) When a *jīva* soul associates with the sole object of its love (the Lord), then it is a devotional state. Therefore, there are three states of a *jīva* soul: conditioned, liberated and devotional.

When a *jīva* soul associates with anything or anyone except the Lord or His devotees, it cannot save itself. If one desires to associate with the illusory environment, it is very difficult for them to save themselves because a *jīva* soul is an atomic expansion of Māyā. Through the omnipresent illusory potency of the Lord, atomic *jīva* soul falls into bondage. The Lord says in *Gitā* (7.14)

daivī hy eṣā guṇamayī, mama māyā dūratyayā
mām eva ye prapadyante, māyām etāṁ taranti te

"My alluring, 'trimodal,' illusory potency is practically insurmountable. However, those who take shelter in Me can overcome this powerful obstacle."

Association is life. If you cannot select your association, i.e. if a *jīva* soul does not come into association with the Lord, if a *jīva* soul identifies itself with anything else besides the Lord's connection, it merely brings unhappiness and fear.

*"bhayaṁ dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syā"
īśād apetasya viparyayo 'smṛtiḥ
tan-māyayāto budha ābhajet tam*

“Those who have turned away from the Lord adopt the illusory ego of considering the perishable body to be the self, forgetting their true identities. Their consciousness absorbed in ‘secondary pursuits’, i.e., mundane objectives, they are always fearful on account of the body and its attachments.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11.2.37)

Association can be also a faulty, or bad, association. Śrī Kapiladev told His mother: the only way to save yourself from the association with the illusory environment is to keep the association of saintly devotees.

prasaṅgam ajaram pāśam ātmanah kavayo viduh
sa eva sādhuṣu kṛto mokṣa-dvāram apāvṛtam

“Every learned man knows very well that attachment for the material is the greatest entanglement of the spirit soul. But that same attachment, when applied to the self-realized devotees, opens the door of liberation.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 3.25.20)

We should steer clear of material association. Bondage means association with the matter. Such association is the cause of the soul’s misery. Who gives this misery? Neither the Lord, nor Māyā give any unhappiness. When a *jīva* soul turns away from the Lord, it desires material association, that is when the function of illusion activates and touches the soul. Illusion is material, how can a soul come in touch with it? A *jīva* soul is situated beyond material nature, but when it thinks, “I am material (*māyik*),” then it comes into association of the matter. That is why the Lord says, “*Paro ‘pi manute ‘narthaṁ tat-kṛtam....* The living entity, although transcendental to the three modes of material nature, thinks of itself as a material product.” (SB, 1.7.5) The *jīva* soul thinks, “I am a man,” “I am a woman”—it then struggles to keep afloat in the twenty-three material elements starting from the ego. The soul tries to get happiness through its material mind, intelligence,

ego, but it does not happen because creation, maintenance, and dissolution are Māyā's duty. The internal potency of the Lord is eternal, so there is no dissolution or destruction in it. According to their desires, *jīva* souls live within two conditions—those who associate with the material world, are conditioned (bound by Māyā), and those who associate with the soul or the Lord, can be either liberated souls or devotees. However, the soul cannot try itself—because of the material attachment it becomes bound by material association. At the same time, this attachment can be broken through association. Who can break our attachment? A *sādhu* (saintly person). Who is a *sādhu*? It is a person who has association with the reality (the soul or the Lord). As long as the *jīva* soul does not get good association of such a person, its bondage will not be removed. A *sādhu* has association with the soul, i.e. the spirit. Those who associate with the soul are liberated; those who associate with the spiritual world are devotees. If a *jīva* soul associates with a liberated saintly person, it becomes liberated. Through good association, the soul become liberated and when it gets the association of the Lord and service to the Lord, it becomes a devotee. Śrī Gaurasundar said, "Kṛṣṇa-bhakti janma mūla haya sādhu-saṅga. Sādhu-saṅga, good association, is what the devotion to Krishna is ultimately born from." The material desires born of the *jīva* soul's association with the material world are removed through the association with the saintly persons. One of the Names of the Lord is 'Sadanugraha.' Brahma glorified the Lord saying, "Sad-anugraho bhavān. You are always kind and merciful to the devotees." It means *sādhus* are the object of His grace. The Lord bestows His mercy upon the *jīva* souls through His *sādhus*. The mercy of Gurudev turns a *jīva* soul into a devotee. The Lord appears Himself or He sends His devotee. When a *jīva* soul can understand these merciful pastimes, then it surrenders at the lotus feet of the Lord and can pray to be rectified. It is through His mercy that the Lord gives a *jīva* soul good association, but

a *jīva* soul cannot get the association of the Lord out of its own desire. The Lord is an object of service, and a *jīva* is a servant. The Lord manifests His appearance pastimes, and eternally reveals His Holy Name, Deity, narrations, and His devotees within the material world. When *jīva* souls become eager to serve the Lord and they can serve the Lord's Name, Deity and narrations through the medium of the association of the Lord's devotees—then they become qualified to attain devotion. Therefore, the Lord tells to establish the rule of devotional life:

mal-liṅga-mad-bhakta-jana-darśana-sparṣanārchanam
paricharyā stutih prahva-guṇa-karmānukīrtanam

“One can give up false pride and prestige by engaging in the following devotional activities. One may purify oneself by seeing, touching, worshiping, serving, and offering prayers of glorification and obeisances to My form as the Deity and to My pure devotees.”

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 11.11.34)

To teach the *jīva* souls about loving devotion to the Lord, Śrī Gaurasundar reveals in this world His appearance pastime; He teaches about the devotees' and the Lord' appearance and association, He does not teach anything else. Two brothers, Gaura and Nitāi remove *jīva* soul's low desires and teach them about *bhakta-bhāgavatam* and *grantha-bhāgavatam* (that the Lord manifests Himself in the form of a devotee and in the form of a scripture) and shows them *prema-bhakti* (loving devotion)—the ideal of one's life. Therefore,

dui bhāi hṛdayera kṣāli' andhakāra
dui bhāgavata-saṅge karāna sākṣatkāra
eka bhāgavata baḍa—bhāgavata-sāstra
āra bhāgavata—bhakta bhakti-rasa-pāṭra
dui bhāgavata dvārā diyā bhakti-rasa
tānhāra hṛdaye tānra preme haya vaśa

“But these two brothers [Lord Chaitanya and Lord Nityānanda] dissipate the darkness of the inner core of the heart, and thus They help one meet the two kinds of bhāgavatas [persons or things in relationship with the Personality of Godhead]. One of the bhāgavatas is the great scripture Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, and the other is the pure devotee absorbed in the mellows of loving devotion. Through the actions of these two bhāgavatas the Lord instils the mellows of transcendental loving service into the heart of a living being, and thus the Lord, in the heart of His devotee, comes under the control of the devotee’s love.”

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, 1.1.98-100)

Although the Lord is unconquerable, He is conquered or subdued by His devotees. Devotees means love—all they know in their life is the object and shelter of their Love. The Lord is the object of love, and devotees are the shelter of love. If there is love, there must be also association or remembrance. Love means life in association; such love exists between a devotee and the Lord. Therefore, a devotee is the one who is devoted to the Lord, and the Lord is devoted to His devotees. Such devotion is a play of Hlādinī, the internal potency of the Lord. It exists between a devotee and the Lord, it gives joy to the Lord through the devotee, and it gives the devotee joy through the Lord—both become controlled by each other. The Lord Himself says that the association of the devotees captures Me in a way that no other energy can. *Bhāgavatam* loudly proclaims this glory of devotees. That is why, Śrīman Mahāprabhu accepted Śrīmad Bhāgavatam as a spotless authority on devotion. *Bhāgavatam* scripture, the water that washes the feet of Devotion, can subdue the Lord to the same extent to which a devotee can subdue Him. Therefore, *Bhāgavatam* said, “*Īśvaraḥ sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate ‘tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇat*. As soon as one attentively and submissively hears the message of *Bhāgavatam*, by this culture of knowledge the Supreme Lord is established within his heart.” (SB, 1.1.2) *Bhāgavatam* loudly

proclaims and sings the glories of the Lord's appearance, His Name, form, qualities, pastimes, and teaches *jīva* souls to practise pure devotion through hearing and chanting the glories of the Lord's pastimes. It is said there,

saṁsāra-sindhum ati-dustaram uttitīrṣor
nānyah plavo bhagavataḥ puruṣottamasya
līlā-kathā-rasa-niṣevaṇam antareṇa
puriso bhaved vividha-duḥkha-davārditasya

"For a person who is suffering in the fire of countless miseries and who desires to cross the insurmountable ocean of material existence, there is no suitable boat except that of cultivating devotion to the transcendental taste for the narrations of the Supreme Personality of Godhead's pastimes."

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 12.4.40)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord Himself, manifested the pastimes of appearing in this world for the sake of *jīva* souls, to give them His association—even after He performs His disappearance pastime, He remains in the form of the *Bhāgavatam*—in this way, to this day, He is still giving fortunate souls the association with His Name, form, qualities, and pastimes. This is the peculiarity of His causeless mercy. The Supreme Lord Śrī Gaurasundar appears as an embodiment of *Bhāgavatam*; at the same time, He shows His pastime of relishing *Bhāgavatam* through His devotees—at the end of His manifest pastimes, being overwhelmed by divine love, He manifest His pastimes of hearing *Bhāgavatam* in the association of Svarūp Dāmodar and Rāya Rāmānanda—He showed in this way how divine love can fulfil one's life through the association of devotees and *Bhāgavatam*. He would listen to the nectarean pastimes recorded in *Bhāgavatam* from the mouths of Svarūp Dāmodar and Rāya Rāmānanda and being possessed by divine love, he would declare them the best donors ("bhūri da! bhūri da!").

When Śrī Gaurasundar suffered from the agony of separation, these two devotees would recite *Bhāgavatam* and make the Lord very happy through this association of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

Relishing transcendental pastime of the Lord in the association of devotees is an ideal of a life filled with divine love—this is what Śrī Gaura taught at the end of His manifest pastimes. Relishing *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the water that washes the feet of Prema (divine love), in the association of loving devotees is an ideal of a life filled with divine love. This is the teaching of Lord Gaurasundar.

We pray at the holy lotus feet of Śrī Gaurasundar that we may learn the conception of Śrī Gaurasundar and eternally glorify and praise the *bhāgavat-guru* and the *bhāgavat-sāstra* (the Lord's manifestation as a guru and as a scripture)—we pray that *Bhāgavatam*, manifest in the form of a scriptures and in the form of a devotee, may bestow its pure mercy on us.



The highest devotional service

The highest devotional practice, or service, is the service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the form that He manifests His pastimes in Goloka-Vṛndāvan. Śrīman Mahāprabhu proclaimed this loudly. He did not tell to practise enjoyment, liberation or mystic powers as *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, and *yogīs* do.

There is a particular astonishing and distinctive feature about the pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. If you want to approach these pastimes, you must come there with a corresponding mood, attire, and behaviour. This mood is not found among *karmīs* and *jñānīs*, they do not even have any idea about this; therefore, they are deprived of the right to enter such pastimes. Everybody's mood is different, so everybody comes to a particular demigod or demigoddesses according to their mood and they get a corresponding result.

ye yathā mām prapadyante, tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham
mama vartmānuvartante, manusyāḥ partha sarvasah

"Howsoever people surrender to Me, I accordingly reward them. Being the ultimate goal of all paths, I am the objective to be attained by all. O Pārtha, all men follow My various paths."
(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā, 4.11)

If you want to come to Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, you must couch yourself in the right mood—then you can come to Him. Coming to Him and coming to somebody else is not the same, just as coming to your father is not the same as coming to your uncle.

Knowledge-seekers worship Kṛṣṇa with their mundane conception. They preach knowledge, but Śrīman Mahāprabhu

is a preacher of devotion—He preached about devotion in front of all the Vedic scholars. Mahāprabhu preached about devotion to a *brahmānandī māyāvādī sannyāsī* Śrī Prakāśānanfd Sarasvatī and Vedic scholar Śrī Sārvabhauma. It is possible to get loving devotion only by practising devotion through transcendental knowledge—no other practice can give you Kṛṣṇa.

From the discussion between Gopa Kumār and Nārad in *Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛtam*, we know that worshipping demigods and demigoddesses, worshipping the master of Vaikuṇṭha, Śrī Nārāyaṇ, even worshipping the master of Dvārakā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and worshipping Vrajeśatanaya Śrī Kṛṣṇa are not one and the same. If you worship Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Controller, you will worship His controlling power with awe—you will be far from the true relationship. When Devakī Devī saw Her son reveal His form of the Supreme Absolute, she started praising her son Śrī Kṛṣṇa with awe and reverence. However, there is no such etiquette or awe for Mother Yaśodā—she beat Kṛṣṇa as her son, she tied Him, she chastised Him. There is no question of etiquette. Śrī Kṛṣṇachandra also accepted this and relished the parental love of His devotees. Kṛṣṇa relishes devotion in friendship with His friends in Vraja, and, subdued by the love of Vraja-gopīs, He relishes paramour pastimes with them. Kṛṣṇa is eternally unrestrained in the company of His sweethearts, the Vraja-gopīs, who are driven by spontaneous devotion to Him. However, the queens of Dvārakā, who have Kṛṣṇa as their husband, do not experience that ecstatic mood in their marriage. Śrī Kṛṣṇa relishes paramour ecstasy only with the *gopīs* of Vraja. This is a supramundane pastime of the domain of divine love. The sweetness and the astonishing nature of these pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are not manifest in any other form of the Lord. Śrī Kṛṣṇachandra, the Lord Himself, is Goloka-pati (master of Goloka). He manifests His pastimes in Śrī Vṛndāvan Dhām on this material planet bringing His eternal abode and eternal associates from the

transcendental plane. These pastimes are eternal. Demigods serve Kṛṣṇa according to their qualification, they are not incarnations of the Lord. Rasika-śekhara Śrī Kṛṣṇachandra descends to this material world from Goloka to reveal His transcendental loving pastimes to the conditioned souls. This is a special mercy that Śrī Kṛṣṇa bestows upon *jīva* souls. Śrī Śukadev, a primeval devotee, said in the primeval scripture of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* that it is possible to get Śrī Kṛṣṇachandra only by practising devotion, there is no other method.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam described pure loving devotion. If one wants to get such devotion, one must first have strong faith in the Lord's qualities, pastimes etc., then one must hear about them. If you listen to or give a class about *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* only, it will not do—because this can also destroy your mind. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* describes a religion that is free from cheating—it is necessary to understand and hear about this religion first, and then only hear about the pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Words of 'Uttamaśloka' Śrī Kṛṣṇa (who is described by choice poetry) are manifest in this world as 'vāchak' (words expressing the Lord; scriptures, the Holy Name). There is no other way to express your love for Him except for chanting the glories of His qualities, etc. Worshipping Śrī Kṛṣṇa because you are distressed or because you want some material gain, is an inferior practice because then you worship Him only for your own pleasure and happiness, there is no desire to please the Lord.

ātmārāmāś cha munayo nirgranthā apy urukrame
kurvany ahaitukīṁ bhaktim ittham-bhūta-guno hariḥ

“The amazing qualities of the Lord are such that even the self-satisfied, the great renounced persons are also drawn to the causeless devotion to this wondrous Lord.”

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 1.7.10)

The amazing qualities of the Lord are such that even the self-satisfied, the great renounced persons are also drawn to

practising Kṛṣṇa consciousness (to worshipping and serving Him). Similarly, Śrī Gaurasundar preached *bhāgavata-dharma* to everyone, from beasts and birds up to humans, and attracted everyone to the service of the Lord.

Śrī Nārada told Gopa Kumār, "O Gopa Kumār! I have a jewel hidden within the cave of my heart, and I have never shown it to anyone yet. I will tell you about it now, please listen to me. It is true that in various incarnations of the Lord, there are many good qualities, but Vrajendra-nandan Śrī Kṛṣṇa not only has more qualities, but they are extremely sweet. Uttamaśloka Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is an emporium of all ecstasies, He is an embodiment of joy, but *nirguṇa* Brahma is a dry conception. In His various forms as Hari, Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, etc., the Lord steals (*harana*), attracts (*ākarsana*), and captures (*ramana*)—He has all these qualities. If a *jīva* soul hears and chants all these Names of the Lord, its mind will be drawn to the Lord's lotus feet. Such feelings do not come by any other methods. If you practise spiritual life but do not hear about the qualities of Vraja-Kṛṣṇa, then love will not awaken within you. Listen about His qualities. '*Ittham-bhuta-guno hariḥ*'—the entire world is charmed by His qualities. Mere hearing about His qualities is the root of devotion. O Gopa Kumār! Listen about the miraculous qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa—you will not find these qualities in any other form of the Lord. Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs various pastimes with His associates—like an ordinary person, He has His friends, a father, a mother, etc.; He also enjoys the spontaneous devotion of the *gopīs*. There is no question of any rules or regulations there. This paramour pastimes are found only in Goloka—nowhere else. Conditioned souls consider these pastimes mundane, but these pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa are transcendental, supra-mundane, divine; they are not mundane.

When you have love for the service ('service love') of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, you will love hearing about His glories. If you have no taste for discourses about Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it means you do not have

service love. Devotees of Kṛṣṇa only sing and hear the glories of Kṛṣṇa's qualities, etc. Chanting the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa destroys all evils, inauspiciousness, unwanted habits that obstruct divine love. To spread His qualities, Śrī Kṛṣṇachandra mercifully appeared in this material world from Goloka in the form of 'vāchak' (His Name, and His scriptures). When devotees chant His Name, glorify His qualities, etc., He immediately descends from Goloka. Śrī Nām reveals Him who bears this Name.

The Lord says,

"mad bhaktāḥ yatra gāyanti tatra tiṣṭāmi nārada"

"I stay wherever My devotees chant My glories and My Names."

It is not sufficient to only follow *varṇāśrama-dharma*, practise *jñāna-vairāgya* or offer flowers and sandalwood to the Deities, to only worship Deities, etc. If you do not hear about and glorify the Name, beauty, qualities, etc. of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, then all your attempts are useless labour—you will not get Him through that. If you hear and speak about Him, it will make Him happy. This is a great service to Him. Greatly magnanimous Śrī Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya Mahāprabhu taught it to this world.

Mahābhāgavata Śrī Yamarāj says,

**etāvān eva loke 'smin pūṁśām dharmaḥ paraḥ smṛtaḥ
bhakti-yoga bhagavati tan-nāma-grahaṇādibhiḥ**

"Devotional service, beginning with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, is the ultimate religious principle for the living entity in human society."

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 6.3.22)

It is possible to get Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇachandra only through *bhakti-yoga* (practice of devotion). Chanting His Name, etc. is *bhakti-yoga*. You may not ring the bell, beat the gong, play the *karatāls*, etc. but there must be a heart beat in your practising life—you must glorify the Lord's qualities, etc. You must drink the nectar

of His kathā with your ears. If you publish somebody's praise in a column in a newspaper, they become very happy because they want this kind of fame and name. Similarly, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa hears His qualities and glories, He also becomes very excited. We must serve with all our senses to make Him happy—this is the distinctive feature of spiritual practising life. If a devotee hears about His qualities, etc. and practises, glorifies Him establishing a loving relationship with Him, then He becomes conquered by such a devotee.

"O Gopa Kumār! Listen now about the qualities of the unconquerable Lord, Śrī Goloka-Bihārī. Although He does not appear in front of the eyes of the *jīva* souls on this moral earth all the time, but He is eternally manifest here in the form of His Holy Name. If you chant His Holy Name with love and affection, He perks up His ears and listens. His expert devotees attend to Him with all their senses and broadcast His qualities and glories—then the unconquerable Lord becomes conquered by His devotees. This is the super-excellence of devotees' service.

"yei jana kṛṣṇa bhaje se bāḍa chatura"

"Those who worship Kṛṣṇa are experts."

Devotees of Mahāprabhu have very mercifully recorded all these things in the scriptures. Their unparalleled gift is a priceless treasure for the *jīva* souls of this world.

Among the later pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, His paramour pastimes in Vṛndāvan are the highest. When He desired to taste these pastimes, He left Goloka—He left all His opulence and supremacy, He even left the association of His very dear associates and came to this earth in human form. Here, Mother Yaśodā tied Kṛṣṇa with a rope, cowherd boys of Vraja played with Him, He played with His own family associates. The pastimes He performed with His sweethearts resemble worldly relationship. Becoming subdued by the love of His devotees,

He accepts their dependence on Him and happily enjoys with them. Devotees in Vraja consider Kṛṣṇa small—they nurture and bring Him up, they treat Him with love. Although He appeared in Mathurā, He never showed such behaviour there. However, even though He is the Supreme in Vraja, He hides His position of a Supreme Controller and enjoys intimate pastimes (*mādhurya-lilā*). Nobody in Vraja thinks Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Absolute. Mother Yaśodā sometimes binds Him, sometimes takes Him on her lap and pets Him. She knows, “Kṛṣṇa is my son.” It is impossible to attain service to Kṛṣṇa without the mood found in Vraja Dhām. Vraja-Kṛṣṇa personally bestows His mercy upon His associates and grants them the service through which they can give happiness to Him.

Lord Kṛṣṇa comes to reveal His transcendental pastimes in Vṛndāvan (on this planet), He comes together with His dear associates and His transcendental super-excellent beauty. His form is produced by Yogamāyā and is revealed in this world. This is not something temporary and mundane. This nectarean ecstatic form draws the whole world—even He Himself becomes attracted by His own beauty.

Śrīman Bhāgavatam says (3.2.12):

yan martya-lilaupayikam sva-yoga-
māyā-balām darśayatā gr̄hitam
vismāpanām svasya cha saubhagarddheḥ
param padam bhuṣaṇa-bhūṣaṇāṅgam

“The Lord appeared in the mortal world by His internal potency, Yogamāyā. He came in His eternal form, which is just suitable for His pastimes. These pastimes were wonderful for everyone, even for those proud of their own opulence, including the Lord Himself in His form as the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha. Thus His [Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s] transcendental body is the ornament of all ornaments.”

Appendix

Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh Book List

Books by Śrīla Bhakti Nirmal Āchārya Mahārāj:

- *Guidance 1, 2, 3, 4;*
- *Sri Upadesha 1, 2, 3, 4 (Bengali)*
- *Sri Puri Dham Mahatmya-mukta-mala (Bengali)*
- *Sri NabadwipDham Mahatmya-mukta-mala (Bengali)*

Books by Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj

- *Affectionate Guidance*
- *Bhagavat Darshan*
- *Dignity of the Divine Servitor*
- *Divine Guidance*
- *Divine Message for the Devotees*
- *Golden Reflections*
- *In Search of the Original Source*
- *Religion of the Heart*
- *Revealed Truth*
- *The Benedictine Tree of Divine Aspiration*
- *The Divine Servitor*
- *The Nectarean Glories of Śrī Nityananda Prabhu*

Books by Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj

- *Absolute Harmony*
- *Awakening to the Absolute*
- *Centenary Anthology*
- *Divine Aspiration*
- *Golden Staircase*
- *Heart and Halo*
- *Home Comfort*
- *Holy Engagement*
- *Inner Fulfilment*

- *Loving Search for the Lost Servant*
- *Ocean of Nectar*
- *Sermons of the Guardian of Devotion (Vol. I-IV)*
- *Śrī Guru and His Grace*
- *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gita: The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*
- *Śrī Śrī Prapanna-jivanamritam*
- *Subjective Evolution of Consciousness*
- *The Guardian of Devotion*
- *The Golden Volcano of Divine Love*
- *The Search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Reality the Beautiful*

Other books

- *Śaraṇāgati*
- *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā*
- *Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu: His Life and Precepts*
- *Śrī Nabadvīpa-dhāma-māhātmya, Śrī Navadvīpa-bhāva-taraṅga*
- *Śrī Śrī Prema-vivarta*
- *The Bhāgavat: Its Philosophy, Its Ethics, and Its Theology*

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Śrī Gurudev is the only shelter for a disciple. Those who have become disciples live in complete adherence to their guru. If one retains independence, they cannot be called a 'disciple'—they can take the mantra, they can take initiation, but if they do not accept guidance or disciplining of Śrī Gurudev, they cannot be called a real disciple. Gurudev has a vast wealth. Those who are born into his lineage, can get the right for his wealth. Gurudev's wealth is not temples, buildings, houses, money; his wealth is faith, devotion and love.

What happens after initiation? It is necessary to practise hearing and chanting, worship Deities and do service. You must serve with love, affection, extracting loving devotion from your very life. You must always think about what makes Him happy. You must be anxious to make Him happy and always be alert and conscious of His happiness. Sacrifice your selfish interests for His happiness, serve for His happiness.

Sannyāsīs always sit amidst fire blazing on all four sides. This fire is Hari-kathā, kirtan, service to the Lord, and service to the guru. You must progress in your practising life keeping the sacrificial fire of your service ablaze.
