

The Harmonist

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Infallible Lessons On the Path of Devotion

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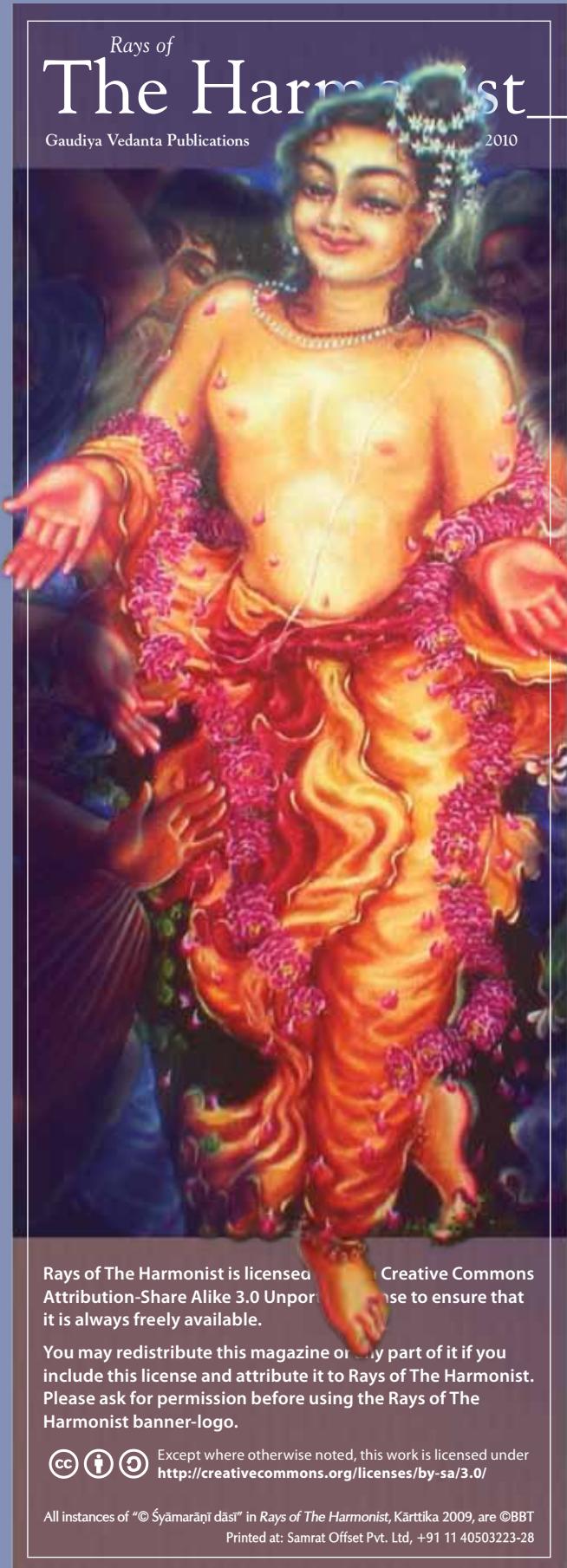
- Eulogy to Śrī Gaṅga-devī • When Sādhu-saṅga is Far Away
- Śrī Bhagavān is not for the Weak-hearted • Is Human Misery a Pastime of God?
- Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā and Śrī Gaudiya Vedānta • and more



*apārāvāram ced amṛtamaya-pāthodhim adhikam
vimathyā prāptam syāt kīm api paramam sāram atulam |
tathāpi śrī-gaurākṛti-madana-gopāla-caranya-
cchaṭā-sprṣṭānām tad vahati vikaṭām eva kaṭutām ||*

*Śrī Caitanya-candrāmṛtam (23)
by Śrīla Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī*

Even if we obtain an indescribably, unprecedently relishable ambrosia from the shoreless ocean of nectar by churning it excessively – for those who have been touched by the splendour from the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the form of Śrī Gaurasundar, who is Madana-gopāla covered by the moods and bodily effulgence of Śrīmatī Rādhikā – it will be terribly bitter in comparison.



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Dedicated to

ĀCĀRYA KEŚARĪ NITYĀ-LILĀ PRAVIṢṭA
OṂ VIṣṇUPĀDA AṢTOTTARA-ŚATA ŚRĪ

Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Founder-Ācārya
of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti

He earnestly desired to re-institute the publication of all the magazines and journals that were being published during the manifest presence of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda.

The *Rays of* Harmonist

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and founder of *Rays of The Harmonist*

OṂ viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata śrī
Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja



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STATEMENT OF PURPOSES

1. To protect the *vicāra-dhārā*, or current of conceptions, of the *svārūpa-rūpānuga-guru-paramparā* as presented in the modern age by Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (i.e. to uproot opinions opposed to the genuine conclusions of the Śrī Gauḍīya *sampradāya*).
2. To promote a co-operative effort to preach the message of Śrī Rūpa-Raghunātha in accordance with the last instructions of Prabhupāda Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda.

EDITORIAL

By the boundless mercy of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga-Gāndharvikā-Giridhārī-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārījī, the *Rays of The Harmonist Monthly On-line Edition* has completed her second year. And she has already issued the auspicious proclamation of her entrance into a third year by kindling remembrance of he who pioneered her propagation, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, on the day of his appearance. In fact, just to commemorate the auspicious moment of his appearance in this world, she manifests every month on the fifth day of the waning moon (*kṛṣṇa-pañcamī tithi*)¹.

This magazine is the embodiment of remembrance of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga-Gāndharvikā-Giridhārī-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārījī; it is their literary incarnation. By propagating the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his associates, *Rays of The Harmonist* precipitates the appearance of eternal welfare for those who are aspiring to perform *bhajana*, and she causes bliss to swell within the hearts of those who are already absorbed in the rapture of *bhajana*. The words of the *mahājanas* are certainly relevant for all times, in every circumstance and in every respect. Moreover, their words alone can provide the solution to all the problems of mankind.

No words can express the profound auspiciousness invested in Śrīla Prabhupāda's nectarean instructions, or in the instructions of his associates and their followers. Nor can words express how profusely these instructions inundate the reader with unrivalled, pristine *siddhānta*, with their ability to attract his heart, and with the power to delight Śrī Kṛṣṇa's transcendental senses. If the sincere *sādhaka*, who aspires for eternal welfare, reads these instructions with faith and attention, then, within his present life, he will definitely realize how unprecedented these instructions are, and he will realize their deep significance and their immovable and direct adherence to truth.

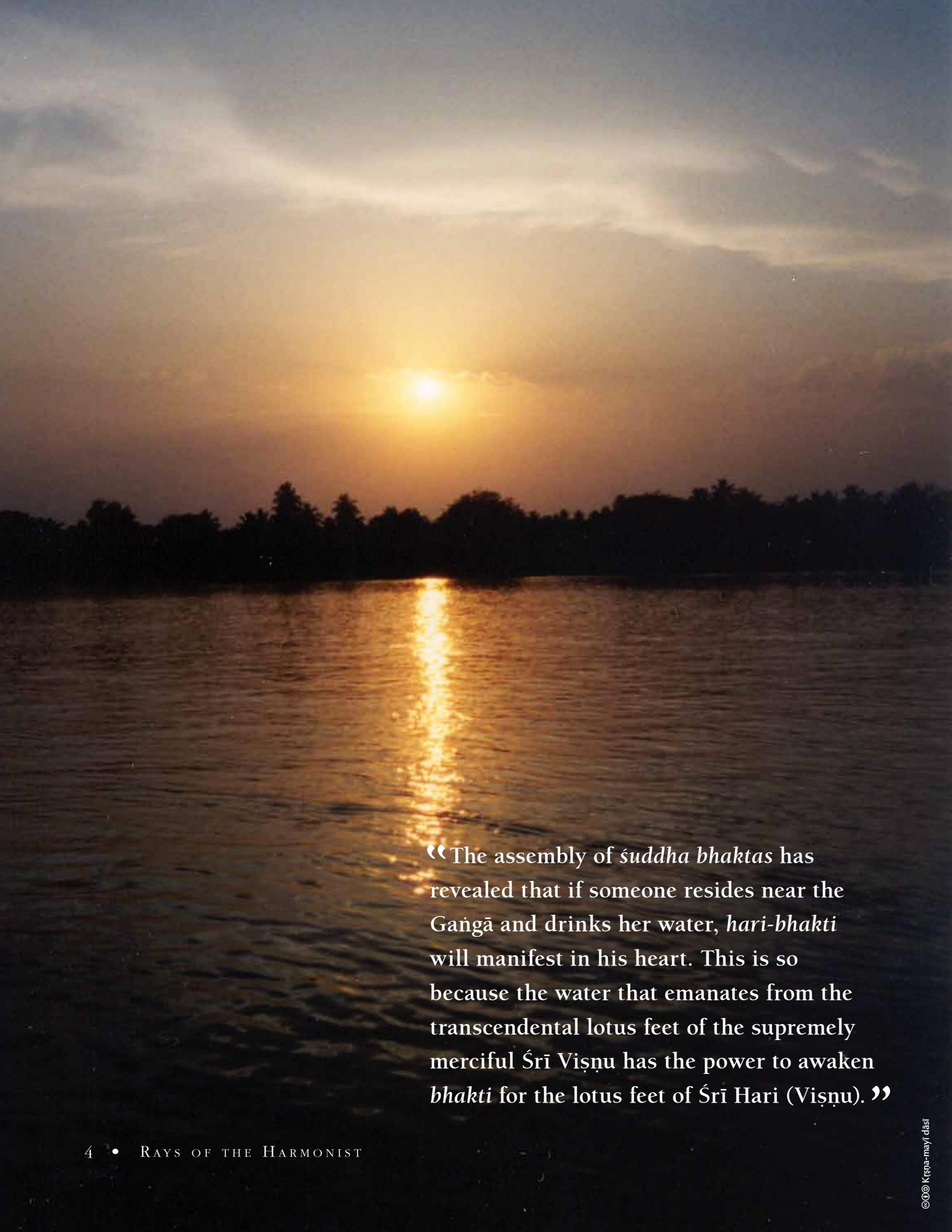
In accordance with Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, *Rays of The Harmonist* will remain aloof from directly focusing on refuting the negative. Rather she will intently and predominantly strive to counteract the negative by profusely performing *anukūla anuśilana* of the non-dual Absolute Truth Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa – that is, she will constantly and ardently strive, with a loving heart, to make Him happy. In essence, she will preach the message of Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Raghuṇātha profusely. Only such *anukūla kṛṣṇa-anuśilana* can nourish the spiritual life of those who sincerely aspire to perform *rūpānuga-bhajana*.

In the present age, the only way to surely and safely progress toward pure *bhajana* of Vraja is to take shelter of the path shown by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda.

The spirit of this editorial is adapted from the editorial of *Gauḍiya*, Year 7, Issue 1

¹ Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura published an English periodical by the name *The Harmonist*, which was an adaptation of *Sajjana-toṣṇī* – or, “she who pleases the Lord’s own”. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura founded *Sajjana-toṣṇī* as the journal for the present movement of pure devotion.





“The assembly of *śuddha bhaktas* has revealed that if someone resides near the *Gangā* and drinks her water, *hari-bhakti* will manifest in his heart. This is so because the water that emanates from the transcendental lotus feet of the supremely merciful Śrī Viṣṇu has the power to awaken *bhakti* for the lotus feet of Śrī Hari (Viṣṇu).”

Eulogy to Śrī Gaṅgā-devī

Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura



By bringing Gaṅgā to the earth, Bhagiratha Ṛṣī liberated his forefathers. Since that time, the many scriptures have extensively broadcasted Gaṅgā-devī's glories. Those who do not honour Gaṅgā mock the scriptures' words.

Recently [some time in the late 1800s] one very famous and erudite American chemist exalted our Bhāgīrathī-Gaṅgā. He had been in India just a few days before and, after analyzing the Ganges water for micro-bacteria, he reported that Ganges water is completely pure. There was neither any trace of contamination nor any microbial bacteria polluting it.

In contrast, all rivers and streams throughout the world are presently contaminated by a profuse amount of such pollutants. But India's Gaṅgā is completely devoid of these faults and is pure in every respect. After microscopic analysis of a vessel of Ganges water, the chemist came to know that the glories of the Gaṅgā, as stated in Hindu scriptures, are all very real.

When he returned to his country, he published the results of this great discovery in numerous major newspapers. Also, he stated that it is not only Gaṅgā that is so pure but all the rivers that are connected to Gaṅgā, as well. He established this through specific methods of analysis.

“Most people these days cannot realize Gaṅgā’s transcendental potency; they simply perceive, by their mundane intelligence, the material composition of her water.”



If the glories of the Gaṅgā had not been proclaimed in scripture, as they have been, but instead had been written according to the opinions of scientists, then the common, innocent man would not have come to revere Gaṅgā to the same extent as we see now. The respected authors of our scriptures, who were nobly dedicated to *dharma*, have brought the immaculate moods of pure religion to the forefront, in all matters. There has been so much benefit as a consequence.

Had these authors instead prescribed life’s injunctions and laws on the grounds of the dry, lifeless soil of mundane science, then the religious moods of India, it seems, could never have spread throughout the world to the extent they have.



It would be insufficient to consider Gaṅgā-devī’s glories from the material perspective alone. The material world is comprised of twenty-four elemental principles, or *tattvas*. The *jīva* himself constitutes the twenty-fifth *tattva*. The *jīva*’s gross, physical body is made up of the twenty-four material *tattvas*, while the *ātmā* of the *jīva*, the twenty-fifth *tattva*, transcends these. And since the *jīva* is beyond material energy (*prakṛti*), he is known as transcendental, or incorporeal (*aprākṛta*). The Supreme Absolute Spirit (Parabrahma) is also an entirely transcendental *tattva*. Another name of Parabrahma is Viṣṇu: “*tad viṣṇoh paramāṁ padam* – that Viṣṇu resides in His supreme, transcendental abode” (*Rg Veda* 1.22.20). This point appears repeatedly throughout the Vedas. Śrī Gaṅgā-devī has sprung from the lotus feet of Viṣṇu, who resides in His own supreme abode. Hence, all of the scriptures approve when the corporeal glories of Gaṅgā, as observed within the existence of her water, are discovered.

The American scholar, along with the authors of so many magazines and newspapers, has merely been enchanted by Gaṅgā’s corporeal glories, but there is unlimited glory present in Gaṅgā-devī, beyond her worldly glories. The assembly of *śuddha bhaktas* (pure devotees) has revealed that if someone resides near the

Gaṅgā and drinks her water, *hari-bhakti* will manifest in his heart. This is so because the water that emanates from the transcendental lotus feet of the supremely merciful Śrī Viṣṇu has the power to awaken *bhakti* to the lotus feet of Śrī Hari (Viṣṇu). Vyāsa and the other great saints have sung this truth everywhere.



The living entities who have been overshadowed by contamination are painfully wallowing in total forgetfulness of Śrī Hari. But when they immerse themselves in the waters of the Gaṅgā and sing about the qualities of Śrī Hari, *bhakti* awakens in their hearts. Only fortunate souls can realize these principal qualities of Gaṅgā, while the realizations of unfortunate souls remain confined solely to Gaṅgā’s material qualities.

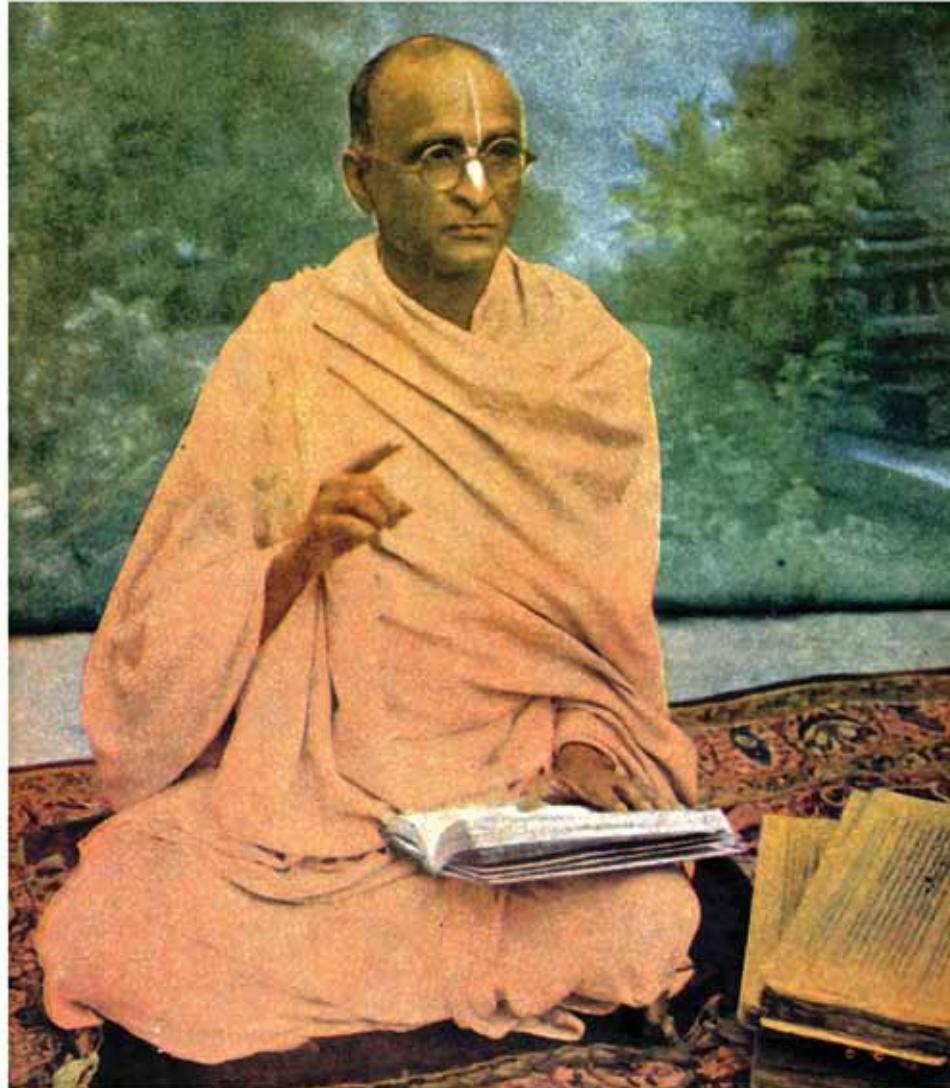
In answer to the doubt that many people repeatedly take bath in the Gaṅgā and drink her waters constantly but still never do *hari-bhajana*, it can be said that qualities from one object can only be transmitted to another object that does not obstruct their transmission.

Electricity can only be transmitted into an object that is a good conductor of electricity, not into an object that is a bad conductor. Similarly, among the *jīvas*, those who commit certain severe offences become bad conductors of *bhakti*, which is here likened to electricity. Just as those who perform sinful activities on the strength of chanting the holy name are severe offenders to the holy name (*nāma-aparādhis*), those who perform sinful activities with the expectation that Gaṅgā-devī’s glorious waters will purify them of their sins are terrible offenders.

All types of sins are washed away by bathing in Gaṅgā, yet the *aparādha* just mentioned is not nullified in the same way. Those who commit this *aparādha* become bad conductors and are unable to realize the unlimited glories of the Gaṅgā. Consequently, most people these days cannot realize Gaṅgā’s transcendental potency; they simply perceive, by their mundane intelligence, the material composition of her water.



Translated from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākurera Prabandhāvalī



Śrīla Prabhupādera

Upadeśāmṛta

Infallible Lessons On The Path of Devotion –
The Nectarean Instructions of
Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda



Question 1: Is it proper to endeavour for personal happiness while neglecting devotional service?

Answer: Never. Endeavours for personal happiness are non-devotional (*abhakti*). A person who always remains busy with his own happiness and freedom, leaving aside service to Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, will never be the recipient of any service from others, despite his desire for it. Instead, he will be neglected and disliked by all. On the other hand, millions upon millions of people, and even Mahāprabhu Himself, will be ready to serve that person who disregards his own happiness and comfort, yet remains continuously engaged in service to *śrī guru* and Kṛṣṇa, with his body, mind and words.

Question 2: With what attitude should we chant the name of Śrī Bhagavān?

Answer: *Suddha-bhaktas* (pure devotees) never call out to Bhagavān to destroy their own sin, to accumulate piety or attain the heavenly planets, or to dispel a famine, epidemic, disturbance of the peace, revolution or disease. Nor do they call out to Him to attain objects for their enjoyment, such as wealth or a kingdom. The very names of Śrī Bhagavān directly indicate the Supreme Controller (Parameśvara) Himself. If we attempt to engage that Supreme Lord in accomplishing any act for our personal sense enjoyment, it means that we are trying to appoint Him, our most worshipful object, as our servant. This is a great offence.

Therefore, unless we call out to Bhagavān for the sake of serving Him, our calling Him will go in vain. Jesus Christ has said, “Do not take God’s name in vain.”¹ But this does not imply that we are not to call out to Him continuously – while sleeping, dreaming, eating, or during times of recreation – and at any time and in any place. If we call out to Bhagavān with a desire to serve Him, then our call will not go in vain; indeed it is our sole obligation. However, if we merely imitate the process of genuinely calling to Him by soliciting Him to fulfill our personal desires then our effort will be in vain. That the name of Bhagavān should not be taken in vain means that one should not call His name with a desire to attain

1 “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain” is the third of the Ten Commandments established by Moses and propounded by Jesus Christ (The Bible, Exodus 20.7).

dharma (religiosity), *artha* (material prosperity), *kāma* (selfish gratification) or *mokṣa* (liberation); rather, the sole reason one should continuously call to Him is to serve Him.

Question 3: What is the difference between the soul, the mind and the body?

Answer: Scripture has delineated the distinctive differences between the soul, the mind and the body, and has given the subtle analysis of them as a spiritual spark, a shadow of spirit, and inert matter, respectively. The soul is the owner of the two other substances – namely the body and mind. The body and mind belong to the soul, and in turn the soul belongs to the Supersoul. The soul has two coverings: one is the subtle covering called the mind and the other is the gross covering called the body.

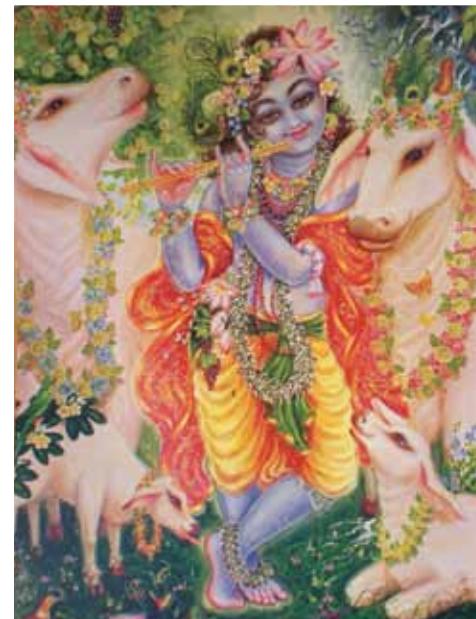
The external material body is the aggregate of the five gross elements, while the internal body, or mental body, is that which drives the external body. Through its connection with the mind, the soul, in its confined state, is bound with incompatible possessions in the form of the physical body. The soul is in a dormant state at present, so it is not aware of service to the Supersoul. Seeing that the soul, their owner, is asleep, these two subordinate workers, the mind and body, fulfil their own narrow-minded interests instead of fulfilling the interests of their proprietor.

The mind’s nature is to waver, but the soul is unchanging and eternal. The function of the mind is to enjoy and to renounce, while the function of the soul is to serve Śrī Bhagavān. The mind can comprehend objects that have up to three dimensions; it has no capacity to understand objects of the fourth dimension because they are beyond sense perception. Through worldly knowledge and experience one cannot comprehend the Supreme Absolute Truth, Śrī Bhagavān, who is beyond the scope of material senses.

Question 4: How, then, will I become acquainted with such transcendental subject matters?

Answer: Just as a messenger brings news of one’s relatives who live in a distant land, a transcendental messenger bears transcendental news. Whoever does not become the recipient of his transcendental message is understood to be extremely unfortunate, for that

If we attempt to engage that Supreme Lord in accomplishing any act for our personal sense enjoyment, it means that we are trying to appoint Him, our most worshipful object, as our servant. This is a great offence.



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transcendental messenger will certainly deliver his message to anyone who is truly eager for it.

Question 5: How will we recognize a messenger from Vaikuntha and the authenticity of his message?

Answer: If our prayers become sincere and honest, then by the mercy of Bhagavān, who is omniscient, everything will be revealed to us. A student can recognize an erudite scholar only with the help of another erudite scholar. Śrī Bhagavān, who resides in our heart, will help us in every aspect of our life. We only have to depend on Him exclusively.

If we want to acquire knowledge of some entity, there are two means by which we can do so. The first means is through knowledge and experience pertaining to this world. But in the case of transcendental entities, the experience and knowledge of this world are to be considered incomplete. Thus the second means is to exclusively surrender one's self to that great personality who has descended from the same realm as that transcendental entity. By hearing from him we can gain an understanding of that entity.

Question 6: Material knowledge and experience are our sole resource. How can rejecting them help us surrender to a supra-mundane being?

Answer: One cannot progress successfully if he fears the process of surrender, thinking it to be difficult. If we want to know the Absolute Truth, we will need

immense spiritual strength of heart. We cannot learn the art of swimming if we fear the mere sight of water. The process of surrender is not a very difficult matter; rather, for the soul it is easy and natural. Whatever is opposed to surrender is unnatural for the soul and painful.

Question 7: By what means can we gain the courage to surrender our very self?

Answer: We have to hear *hari-kathā* from a bona fide representative of Bhagavān. When we listen to him speak, we must shut out all of our worldly experience, knowledge and flawed logic. As we continue to hear the transcendently powerful and valorous narrations of Bhagavān from a living *sādhu*, unwanted obstructions (*anarthas*) like weak-heartedness will gradually be removed. At that time unprecedented courage will enter our heart and selfless surrender, the natural propensity of the soul, will be fully awakened. In such a surrendered heart the self-manifesting Absolute Truth of the transcendental realm will reveal Himself. This is the only way we can know the Absolute Truth, for it is impossible by any other means to know that truth, which is free from any trace of deceit.

Question 8: What is the specific necessity of surrender and determination?

Answer: It is essential to have full confidence in Bhagavān. It is equally essential to have similar firm determination to perform *hari-bhajana*, the process of

devotional service. I must receive His grace. I must not go astray. I must always go on chanting His name. God will undoubtedly help me if I am bona fide.

If someone is exclusively surrendered to the lotus feet of *śrī gurudeva*, he will certainly attain the fulfilment of all his desires. May the mercy of *śrī gurudeva*, who is non-different from Śrī Rūpa, truly be our sole support. Only then can we attain our spiritual welfare.

Question 9: Can one perform *kṛṣṇa-bhajana* without accepting the shelter and guidance of *śrī guru*?

Answer: Never! We will exclusively perform *kṛṣṇa-anuśīlana* (perpetual, ardent endeavour meant exclusively for Śrī Kṛṣṇa). This *kṛṣṇa-anuśīlana* is possible only under the guidance, or direction, of Kṛṣṇa's devotees. Śrī Vārṣabhānavī-devī (Śrī Rādhā) is *anukūla*—genuinely kind to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, Anukūla is another name for Śrī Rādhā. All of our divine *gurus* are none other than the dear most associates of Śrī Vārṣabhānavī-devī. We, the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas, are worshippers of that Kṛṣṇa who belongs to Anukūla Śrī Rādhā. Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas are more inclined to Śrī Rādhā than to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī gurudeva is the non-different manifestation of Śrī Rādhā. Only through the *ānugatya*, or guidance, of Anukūla can one perform perpetual and ardent endeavour meant exclusively for Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-anuśīlana*). Wherever the guidance of Anukūla, that is, the guidance of *śrī guru*, is absent, it will not be possible to ardently endeavour to cause Śrī Kṛṣṇa pleasure out of genuine kindness to Him (*anukūla kṛṣṇa-anuśīlana*). Instead, all that will exist will be the devastating desire for one's own happiness.

Only by relinquishing this conceited propensity, which is opposed to *bhakti*, while performing service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of *śrī guru*, can everything be achieved. Unfortunately however, instead of seeking to give pleasure to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we have become busy in the search for our own pleasure. Alas! Denying Kṛṣṇa as the master of our home, we ourselves have assumed that position and thus have become *grha-vrata* (someone who has vowed to enjoy their senses by fulfilling their fantasies). But if we wish to attain our real welfare, we will have to become attentive to it within this very lifetime. Otherwise we will be deprived of it and become the loser, despite receiving such a golden opportunity.

Question 10: Will dressing as a *sannyāsī* make things easier for me?

Answer: Not at all! Things will not become easier if one merely acquires the garb of a *sannyāsī* (renunciant). If one becomes *gurudevatātmā*, that is, if he considers *śrī guru* to be the *devatā* (worshipful Lord) and as dear as his very *ātmā* (soul), and if he thus makes service to *śrī guru* his life and soul, then he alone can become a true *sannyāsī*. It is preferable that only a *bhakta* who has steadfast faith and devotion in the spiritual master (*guru-niṣṭhā*) and steadfast faith in chanting the holy name (*nāma-niṣṭhā*) should become a *sannyāsī*.

However, those who do not engage in service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of *guru* and instead become involved in bad association, will become completely ruined. They will never be able to understand Bhagavān or attain loving service to Him.

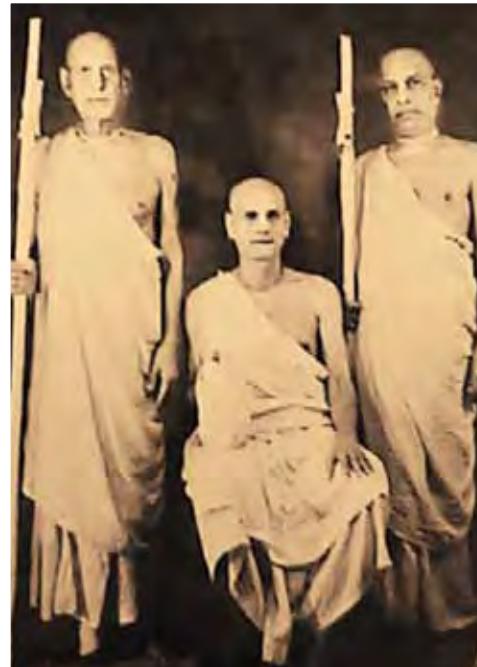
By dressing oneself as a saint it is possible to fool others in this world, but the omniscient Lord, who bestows results according to one's *karma*, will never pardon such a person. Those who dress as *sādhus* but are engaged in *asat-saṅga* (bad association) are harming their very own interests. By not depending on Bhagavān, by relying on someone else, one only invites grief.

Question 11: Is this world really a prison house for the conditioned souls?

Answer: Those who do not desire anything from this material world are called *niṣkiñcana* devotees. In their opinion, there is nothing in this world, no object or being, that can give us perpetual happiness. This earth is a prison house for the conditioned soul. As a result of our aversion to Kṛṣṇa, we have become prisoners here and are thus suffering so much pain and agony. As prisoners we are under the control of the jailor of this prison house – our mind – and consequently we conceive of our sorrow to be happiness. By this we attain our due distress. Every fool who runs after sense enjoyment in this illusory material world will find himself entangled by nescience in the clutches of *māyā*.

Those who are *grha-vrata*, who have taken a vow to enter into and enjoy worldly life, think, "We must get a servant and, now that we have become *grha-vrata*, we shall easily manage everything and easily understand everything with the help of our very own senses." The

Things will not become easier if one merely acquires the garb of a *sannyāsi* (renunciant). If one becomes *gurudevatātmā*, that is, if he considers *śrī guru* to be the *devatā* (worshipful Lord) and as dear as his very *ātmā* (soul), and if he thus makes service to *śrī guru* his life and soul, then he alone can become a true *sannyāsi*.



desire to become a politician, a litterateur, a scholar, a wealthy person, an altruist, the leader of a nation, an intellectual or a materialist in general is nothing but the desire to become the master of *māyā*.

However, Prahlāda Mahārāja says, “Do not let your senses wander toward the external worlds. Do not hold external material objects in esteem.” We have become *deha-ātmavādīs* (those who consider the body to be the self) and *grha-vrata* (those who have taken a vow to enter into and enjoy worldly life), and thus we dress ourselves up as masters of this world. We view this world with eyes that seek selfish gratification and enjoyment, and we think that all should be our servants, ever prepared to wait upon us. All elements, like earth, water, fire, air, ether; as well as the moon, the sun, the planets, the constellations; plants, animals, trees and creepers – all are ripe for my enjoyment. We think, “I am the enjoyer of this world; everyone in it is meant to serve me.” But do we ever consider whom this world is actually for? It is an instrument to be used in the service of Jagadīśvara, the Lord of the Universe. If we are not engaged in *hari-bhajana* then we do not even have the right to take a piece of straw from this world.

Question 12: Who does Kṛṣṇa attract?

Answer: The Being “Kṛṣṇa” attracts all the three worlds. This substantive entity alone is attractive. Just as a

magnet only attracts iron, not wood, Bhagavān, who is most worshipful, only attracts those souls who are inclined to serve Him (*sevā-unmukha*) and those who are already His servants (*sevaka*). Greed to relish the sweetness of transcendental service to Him attracts both types of souls.

However, if a person who is inclined to serve Him (*sevā-unmukha*) becomes attracted at some point to something else, he will be deprived of that original attraction. On one side is attraction to the material world, which leads to bondage, and on the other side is that most auspicious attraction to Kṛṣṇa. In this world, attractive forms, tastes, smells, sounds and touches are extremely close by, and due to our feebleness we become attracted to them. But if someone in this condition can incessantly hear *hari-kathā* from the lips of the *sādhu-guru*, then he can procure his release from the clutches of those nearby enemies.

If we cannot become attracted to the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa then we are bound to become attracted to *māyā*. When we become attracted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s name, beautiful form and so forth, we may be relieved of our present, self-inflicted inconvenience of assuming the position of the enjoyer, a position which in truth belongs to Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone. To the extent that we engage in hearing, chanting and remembering the narrations of Kṛṣṇa, our false notions of being the enjoyer will be dispelled, and then we will surely feel attraction to Kṛṣṇa.

Question 13: How can we achieve our transcendental welfare?

Answer: One invites terrible trouble by becoming a *grha-vrata* (one who has accepted a vow to remain in family life) or a *grha-asakta* (one who is attached to his home and family). If, however, we remain under the guidance of that *śrī gurudeva* who is at every moment engaged in service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and render service to him, all of our troubles will cease to exist.

There is no way to obtain our transcendental welfare other than by following in the footsteps of the devotees of the Lord (*bhagavad-bhaktas*). Service to *gurudeva*, who is *bhagavat-preṣṭha*, most dear to Bhagavān, is even more beneficial than directly serving Him, the Original Being. We shall indeed receive the utmost benefit by serving *śrī guru*. Even the most fallen souls obtain deliverance by rendering service to *śrī guru*. Those who are seeking their own true welfare shall certainly engage in service to *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas with utmost care and respect.

What is service to *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas? *Śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas do not engage in anything other than service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Rendering service to *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas means to assist them in their service to Bhagavān and to blissfully follow their instructions without any hesitation or doubt.

Therefore, the guidance (*ānugatya*) of *śrī guru* is essential under all circumstances. To vainly disregard the guidance of *śrī guru* and then to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa on one's own only leads to discomfort. One is completely ruined by disobeying or disapproving of *śrī guru*. To think, 'I am serving Śrī Hari' is sheer arrogance. This arrogance alone is the first and foremost cause of one's fall-down.

By trying to find flaws in *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas, one is inevitably inviting his own doom. Nothing other than service to *śrī guru* can be beneficial or auspicious for the *jīva*.

Busying oneself in the search for one's own pleasure results in inauspiciousness. Without becoming one-pointed one cannot render service to Kṛṣṇa. And it is not possible to become one-pointed unless one serves *śrī guru*. There is no means of deliverance for the soul bound by *māyā* other than service to *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas.

Question 14: Is Śrī Rādhā the original spiritual master?

Answer: The foremost transcendental pleasure-giving potency (*hlādinī-svarūpa para-śakti*) Śrī Rādhā, is the sole *guru* of all devotees. Not only this, She is even the *guru* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who, accepting a position as Her disciple, learns the art of dancing.

Pure devotees (*śuddha-bhaktas*) who are in a *rasa* other than *madhura-rasa* (transcendental amour), consider Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu to be the original spiritual master. However, for those *rasika* devotees who are in *madhura-rasa*, the original *guru* is Śrī Rādhikā Herself.

Question 15: Why are we not attaining God-realization?

Answer: How is it possible to attain realization of Bhagavān if the *jīva*, who is constitutionally a servant of the Lord, is not constantly associating with and serving Bhagavān and His *bhaktas*? If I am occupied with my worldly, material affairs, then how will I receive any response from Jagadīśvara, the master of the universe?

Overpowered by wicked desires I have now become so evil-minded that I have developed a relationship with this world that promises to last well into the future. This wicked intelligence of mine has developed simply due to my aloofness from the Original Fountain Head. Just as by stepping on quicksand the foot is swallowed up, by depending on the phenomenon of treacherous soil, we are drowning.

Instead of becoming inclined towards Kṛṣṇa, we, who are possessed of evil desires, spend our time in endeavours that are averse to Him. The external potency (*māyā*) of Śrī Viṣṇu has captured us by making us enjoyers, or material activists. We should be very cautious. We essentially require the guidance of a governor – that is, *śrī guru* – at every step.

Service to the devotees promises more than service to the Lord Himself. The association of the *bhaktas* is even more beneficial than the association of the Lord. The living place of the *bhakta*, the abode of *śrīla gurudeva*, is more favourable for *śuddha-bhajana* (pure, loving devotional service) than the abode of the Lord. '*yathāya vaiṣṇavagāṇa, sei sthane vṛndāvana* – wherever the

Śrī Bhagavān says that all this suffering, pain, misery and calamity has been enacted, not to make you grief stricken, but to teach you that suffering is unwanted. You can then search after that happiness which is prayed for eternally; that bliss which is always sought after.



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Vaiṣṇava resides, that very place is Vṛndāvana, the abode of Kṛṣṇa”.

It is important to properly understand this. If we are apathetic towards *guru-sevā*, we will not be able to become a true servant; rather, we will become arrogant. In other words, we will remain bound in the current of thought that relates to the external world alone.

Throughout the entire theistic world, there is no subject superior to that of service to the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. It is therefore necessary to constantly engage in hearing *hari-kathā* so that we do not end up deprived of service to Adhokṣaja (He who is beyond the reach of the material senses), perceiving ourselves to be the controller, instead.

We ought to intensely focus on our *hari-bhajana* because many lifetimes have already passed in other activities. We must therefore take perpetual care to achieve the topmost goal in this very life. When, with extreme care, we constantly engage in service to *śrī guru* and Kṛṣṇa with love and attention, we shall definitely be able to realize Bhagavān.

Question 16: Why is there so much suffering in this world?

Answer: Śrī Bhagavān says that all this suffering, pain, misery and calamity has been enacted, not to make

you grief stricken, but to teach you that suffering is unwanted. You can then search after that happiness which is prayed for eternally; that bliss which is always sought after.

Question 17: How is hearing or speaking about mundane topics (*grāmya-kathā*) harmful, or unfavourable, to one's *bhakti*?

Answer: Śrīman Mahāprabhu has said:

*grāmya-kathā nā śunibe, grāmya-vārtā nā kahibe
bhāla nā khāibe āra bhāla nā paribe*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 6.236)

Do not listen to the mundane talk of common men or engage in discussions about mundane topics. Do not eat palatable foodstuffs or dress yourself nicely.

This statement has been made solely for those who have deep faith in *hari-bhajana* and an intense taste for it. Eating highly palatable foodstuffs mostly only causes harm to one's own self; it does not cause so much of a disturbance to others. In other words, eating palatable foodstuffs does not obstruct the *hari-bhajana* of others. Still, the urge of the tongue is not beneficial, since it is harmful to one's own *bhakti*. Śrīman Mahāprabhu has also said:

*jihvāra lālase yei iti-uti dhāya
śiśnodara-parāyaṇa kṛṣṇa nāhi pāya”*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 6.227)

Being carried away by the urge of the tongue, one who runs here and there seeking palatable food, thus making the satisfaction of his belly and genitals his principal objective, cannot attain Kṛṣṇa.

Wearing very nice clothes, however, is quite harmful to others, since people only wear stylish clothing for the sake of others. What does this mean? The only purpose in dressing stylishly is to distract people's eyes and minds away from *hari-bhajana* and make them bid it farewell.

Hearing worldly mundane talk causes oneself more harm than eating delicious food, and by speaking about mundane topics, one causes more harm to others than by wearing stylish clothes. Ordinary, or mundane talks are just like a prostitute in that they cause immense obstacles to one's *hari-bhajana* by polluting and distracting one's mind.

One who has great interest in these useless talks will surely lack a natural taste for *hari-kathā*. This is to be clearly understood. Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has said, “*asad-vārtā veṣya visrja mati-sarvasva-haranīḥ* – Please abandon altogether the prostitute of contemptible mundane talk, which plunders the entire treasure of pure wisdom.”

When five people sit together, they will definitely engage in useless talk.² This is why the devotees always remain engaged in speaking *hari-kathā*. When *hari-kathā* is being spoken, no one has an opportunity to engage in useless mundane talk.

Those who wish to perform *hari-bhajana* will not listen to ordinary mundane topics or speak about them, nor will they give their attention to eating palatable food or wearing stylish clothes. This is because the desire for such activities or interest in them, will definitely cast one far from the path of *hari-bhajana*.

One can never perform *hari-bhajana* if one desires to eat palatable food or wear nice clothes. Moreover, the desire for and interest in hearing and speaking ordinary mundane topics will alienate the *jīva* from *hari-bhajana* and lead him down the wrong path. Thus he would bid *hari-bhajana* farewell. Consequently, it is particularly

2 It is said, 'Five people gathered together cannot be unhappy'.

essential for one who sincerely desires to perform *hari-bhajana* to exercise extreme caution in these matters. Otherwise one's ruin is inevitable.

Question 18: How will we attain *kṛṣṇa-prema*?

Answer: The devotees of Bhagavān harbour the auspicious wish that the living beings will attain their eternal welfare and not just remain occupied with inauspicious matters. The only means to attain that eternal welfare is to accept shelter at the lotus feet of *śrī gurudeva*, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha*). By taking shelter at the lotus feet of *śrī gurudeva*, who is non-different from Śrī Rūpa, one will attain the position of a servant of Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That *śrī gurudeva* must be served with determined conviction and love, and one must hear about *hari-bhajana* from his lotus lips.

When the dust upon the lotus feet of *śrīla gurudeva* becomes our mainstay, we will be able to attain *mādhurya-sevā* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He who is the enchanter of the whole world (*bhuvana-mohana*). Hence we must always worship the lotus feet of *śrīla gurudeva*, without cessation.

Śrīla gurudeva is transcendental (*aprākṛta*). He is not a transient entity of this world, merely a gross frame of flesh and blood. His form, like the form of Śrī Bhagavān, is composed of eternality, knowledge and bliss. *Śrīla gurudeva* is *nara-brahma* (a transcendental human being), not *nara* (an ordinary, mortal man). Any service rendered to the transcendental beings *guru* and Gaurāṅga by those who consider them to be among the multitudes of this world is simply pretentious, since such people only serve them to fulfil their own selfish interests. Such service is not pure service; rather it simply reflects the mentality of a merchant, or *padmā-nīti*³.

As long as the living soul does not come completely under the guidance of that most worshipful being, *śrī gurudeva*, Bhagavān will not become the object of his *darśana* (vision). Those who are not aware of the qualities of *śrī gurudeva*, such as his transcendence (*aprākṛtavā*), his position as the master (*īśvaravā*)

3 *Padmā-nīti* – the policy of Padmavatī, the mother of Kāṁsa, who wanted to settle the Yādavas' debt to the Vrajavāsīs by calculating back-payment for all the transcendental, loving services they performed for Kṛṣṇa while He lived with them.

Any service rendered to the transcendental beings *guru* and *Gaurāṅga* by those who consider them to be among the multitudes of this world is simply pretentious, since such people only serve them to fulfil their own selfish interests. Such service is not pure service; rather it simply reflects the mentality of a merchant, or *padmā-nīti*.



and his exceptional intimacy with Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhatvā*), are totally unqualified to gain entrance into the transcendental realm of *kṛṣṇa-sevā*. Only by the mercy of *śrī gurudeva* shall we come within the close proximity of the Transcendental Entity.

In other words, by accepting shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanyadeva we will be able to attain His *darśana* with divine eyes, which will be made of pure consciousness and saturated with the beautiful proclivity to serve. Thus, by securing the fortune of coming close to the lotus feet of *svayam-rūpa* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we will become blessed and accomplish our purpose.

As long as we remain captivated by mundane, external appearances (*prakṛta-rūpa*), we will not attain *darśana* of *śrī gurudeva*, who is non-different from Śrī Rūpa (Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī or, literally, “that graceful beauty”). Only when we sincerely and honestly perform loving service (*bhajana*) to those worshipful entities, *śrī guru* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, will we achieve auspiciousness, and only then will our present vision, vision by which we perceive every object as an object meant for our enjoyment, finally cease. Therefore, my prayer is:

*adadānastrinām dantair
idam yāce punah punah
śrimad guru padāmbhoja
dhulih śyām janma-jammani*

Taking a blade of grass between my teeth, I fall down and pray again and again: “I do not wish for anything like the four goals of human life, namely

dharma (religiosity), *artha* (economic development), *kāma* (sense gratification) and *mokṣa* (liberation). I only want to become a speck of dust at the lotus feet of Śrīla Gurudeva. That is, under my Śrīla Gurudeva’s guidance, I wish to constantly serve Bhagavān in the same way that my *gurudeva* does.”

“Kṛṣṇa is mine, and if I do not serve Him, He will undergo great trouble.”

We will only attain *kṛṣṇa-prema*, or service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, when a mood like this fully ripens. And such great fortune is only possible when we earn *śrī gurudeva*’s affection by rendering service to him.

Question 19: Is faith (*śraddhā*) in *śrī gurudeva* actually the root of *bhakti*?

Answer: Certainly. It is absolutely essential to have *sambandha-jñāna* (knowledge of existential relationships) before *bhakti* awakens. *Śrī gurudeva* alone bestows this *sambandha-jñāna*. Unflinching faith in *śrī guru*, who is completely transcendental, is the root of *bhakti*.

Adau śraddhā. The first stage is the attainment of transcendental faith. After relinquishing blind assurance that there are numerous different religions and abandoning the path of logic and argument, our first and foremost requirement is to develop *śraddhā* in the auspicious instructions of *śrī gurudeva*.

What does *śraddhā* mean? *Śraddhā* means to possess full confidence in the words of *śrī gurudeva*. It means

we shall never rely on the words of any worldly person because everyone but *śrī gurudeva* is a pretender. Renouncing the words of every other person in this world, we shall establish the words of *śrī gurudeva* as the object of our full faith, for he has descended from Vaikuṇṭha just to deliver us. If we do not do this, then there will be no scope for our welfare. Only by the mercy of *śrī gurudeva* will all of our *anarthas* (obstacles) be dispelled and all of our hopes fulfilled. By his mercy alone we will definitely be granted the *darśana* of Bhagavān and attain His mercy.

By entering the vicinity of *sādhu* and *guru* and by associating with them, we shall be relieved of all of our difficulties and shall thereafter attain *śuddha-bhakti*. Therefore, we should implicitly rely upon *śrī gurudeva* in order to approach and serve the Absolute Person. *Śrī guru* will give us the highest good. If, perchance, we shall meet a real *guru*, then we shall surely be saved and shall verily reach our goal.

Śrī guru will always supply and enrich us with transcendental knowledge and service. To think that I will regulate *gurudeva* in any way is the outlook of an atheist. It is this conception alone that constitutes disobedience to the spiritual master (*guru-avajña* – the first of the ten offences to the holy name) and must be forsaken at all times.

By the mercy of *śrī gurudeva*, we, the atomic sparks of consciousness (*anu-caitanya*), will approach the Supreme, Infinite Consciousness (*vibhu-caitanya*). We will relinquish the association of other ordinary fellows and approach our eternal Lord. Though *śrī gurudeva* considers himself to be an insignificant servant of Bhagavān, I consider him to be my eternal friend and well-wisher and the only one who can help me approach Bhagavān. I consider *śrī gurudeva* to be both identical to Bhagavān and also the beloved of Bhagavān. I will surrender myself completely unto his lotus feet. Without any selfish interest, I will dovetail all my endeavours exclusively to serve him. Only then shall I achieve all perfection.

Question 20: How can we achieve happiness?

Answer: One can achieve freedom from fear and sorrow and can experience real happiness by remaining in the shelter of *śrīla gurudeva*'s lotus feet, and one can gain his association by serving him. One can receive the mercy

of *śrīla gurudeva* very quickly by remaining engaged in serving him at every moment, through one's body, mind and words. When *śrīla gurudeva* is pleased, the inclination to serve him increases more and more. This good fortune stands alone as the topmost good fortune and the only true reward.

Question 21: What is *bhakti*?

Answer: The quest to give happiness and satisfaction to Bhagavān constitutes *bhakti*. The meaning and purpose of *bhakti* is to increase the happiness and satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, not oneself. *Bhakti* is the inborn occupation of the living soul and she alone is the sole eternal and natural constitutional function (*dharma*) of the living entity. By constitution, the soul has no other function (*dharma*).

Any other tendency is not the soul's true *dharma*, since no other tendency constitutes the soul's constitutional function as *bhakti* does. Rather, such other tendencies are distorted reflections of real *dharma*, and are thus temporary and transient.

Bhakti is the destroyer of fear, sorrow and delusion. Absorption in that which we perceive as separate from Kṛṣṇa is the sole cause of fear, sorrow, delusion and so on. Everything that is perceived as separate from Kṛṣṇa or His devotees constitutes *dvitiya-abhiviveśa* (absorption in secondary, or petty, matters). *Bhakti* is comprised of exclusive, full absorption in a single entity: Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. And it is full of steadfastness (*niṣṭhā*) in Him.

Question 22: Does Bhagavān ever interfere with the independence of the living entity?

Answer: The living entity is a minuscule fragment (*anu-anīśa*) of Parameśvara, the Supreme Infinite Consciousness (*vibhu-caitanya*).

A drop of water has the same qualities as the ocean of water, though in minute quantity. Similarly, since *vibhu-caitanya* Bhagavān is supremely independent, the infinitesimal soul also has the quality of independence, but only to an infinitesimal degree.

The living entity is not created; rather he is an eternal entity. Nor is the living soul inert; rather he is conscious. The independence that a living entity possesses has not been granted by anyone. Independence is innate in his existence and he only experiences distress due to misusing his independence.

The independence that a living entity possesses has not been granted by anyone. Independence is innate in his existence and he only experiences distress due to misusing his independence.



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Bhagavān never interferes with anyone's independence, for He shall never destroy *cetana-dharma*, the soul's natural, innate state of cognizance. Bhagavān is an ocean of compassion, and so He simply acquaints the living being with the use and misuse of his faculty of cognizance. Only they who engage in *bhajana* of Bhagavān after listening to all these instructions of His or to the instructions of scriptures – in other words, they who exercise their independence appropriately – can attain their actual, topmost welfare.

Question 23: What is *māyā* (nescience)?

Answer: “*Miyate anayā iti māyā* – that which can be used to measure or that which can be measured is *māyā*.” Combining *mā* (not) and *yā* (which) yields the word *māyā* – “that which is not”.

Māya is comprised of all that is perishable and temporary. That which is not the Supreme Lord Bhagavān, is *māyā*. Bhagavān is the master of *māyā*; He cannot be measured.

Māyā, as described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, is not a separate entity, as it appears in Christianity, where Godhead and Satan are deemed two separate entities. According to the school of the *Bhāgavata*, *māyā* resides behind the Supreme Personality, Bhagavān, as though His shadow, in a state of condemnation in order to

chastise and correct the living beings who have become averse to Kṛṣṇa.

Question 24: What is *ārohavāda*⁴, or the ascending process?

Answer: The policy of *ārohavāda* is, like Rāvaṇa, to attempt to construct a stairway to reach Heaven. That kind of uphill work is most puzzling. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, it has been prescribed that this ‘uphill work’ – namely, trying to construct a stairway to heaven – be abandoned.

On one end of the spectrum is attempting to force the sun to become visible at night by using lanterns, and on the other end is prayerfully waiting for sunrise and then viewing the sun by way of its own rays of light. If we hanker for temporary objects of enjoyment, we are bound to become followers of the path of *ārohavāda*, compelled to endeavour to acquire *jñāna* or to perform *karma* or *yoga*.

But endeavours on the path of *ārohavāda* will always remain incomplete. A twenty year old civilization

⁴ The words *ārohavāda* and *avarohavāda* literally mean the ascending path and the descending path. The former refers to depending on one's own abilities to elevate oneself to a higher stage of existence, while the latter refers to depending on help from above to become elevated.

shall surely prove to be deficient and fault-ridden in comparison to a one hundred year old civilization, and the knowledge and culture of a two-hundred year old civilization shall at once be rejected in favour of the knowledge and culture of a one-thousand year old civilization. In fact, intelligent men do not pursue the ascending path (*ārohavāda*) in any of their activities; rather they are *avaroha-panthi*, followers of the descending process.

Question 25: Can the mentality of inductive reasoning (*ārohavāda*) be permanently relinquished?

Answer: As long as someone maintains the mentality that he can fully depend on his own strength and abilities, his own self-confidence and his own understanding, he will be unable to surrender unto the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān. And he will have great regard for the notion of argument and reasoning (*ārohavāda*) as long as the notion of surrender has not manifested in his heart.

Only when someone realizes the insignificance of his own ability to support himself, the worthlessness of his proud self-conception and the ineffectiveness of his own endeavours, can he surrender himself and accept the path of receiving help from above (*avarohavāda*).

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam recounts the history of Gajendra, the king of the elephants. Once, Gajendra was passionately engaging in water sports within a lake, along with all of his wives. Due to his wild stamping, he was a threat to all the other living beings in the lake who lived in constant fear of being trampled to death by him.

But then, a very powerful crocodile suddenly appeared from within the lake and caught hold of the leg of the intoxicated Gajendra. A fierce fight ensued between the elephant and the crocodile. It was so severe that it continued to rage even after a thousand years had passed, since they were both trying to display their might by overpowering the other. Gradually, however, Gajendra's strength began to diminish. As he lost his power his madness, bravado and self pride also began to wane. When Gajendra, who was hopelessly trapped by the crocodile, saw that there was no way for him to escape, he realized that the most beneficial course of action for him was to accept the shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord.

Like the proud elephant, as long as the *jīva* considers his insignificant existence to be important, he follows the

path of *ārohavāda*, but when the glories of surrendering unto the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān manifest within his heart, he accepts the path of surrender, or *avarohavāda*. All *sādhus* exclusively preach the path of surrender. They never instruct us to adopt *ārohavāda* (the ascending process). However great a person may be, if he follows the path of *ārohavāda*, considering it to be auspicious, he is bound to fall down. Kṛṣṇa is the sole shelter of all. We can never be protected by the belief that anyone else can provide us shelter.

*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni
guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśāḥ
ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā
kartāham iti manyate*

Bhagavad-gītā (3.27)

All aspects of material activity are performed by the modes of material nature, yet he whose intelligence has become bewildered by false ego considers himself to be the doer.

Due solely to their false ego, the intelligence of dull-minded people is inclined towards mundane goal-oriented activities. These elevationists are of course followers of *ārohavāda*.

Likewise, the *jñānīs*, who seek emancipation, want to attain greatness solely by their own endeavours: “*jñānī jñān-mukta-daśā pāinu kari’ mane* – the *jñānīs* falsely consider that they have attained the stage of liberation” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 22.29). The *jñānīs* wish to become *brahma* (the Supreme Absolute). This longing of one who is utterly insignificant to become the most prominent of all is called *ārohavāda*. The *yogīs* wish to become only a little greater than they already are by acquiring some supernatural power and opulence, or else they desire liberation by merging with the existence of *brahma*. All these endeavours are nothing but *ārohavāda*.

We should simply remain in our own station, whatever it may be. We should never become a *jñānī* and follow the path of *ārohavāda*, nor should we engage in the ill-minded endeavours of a *karmī* or *yogī* on the path of *ārohavāda*. We should not be influenced by the desire for the attainment of monistic emancipation (*mokṣa*) or enjoyment (*bhoga*). Rather, surrendering our body, mind and words, we should hear *hari-kathā* from the mouths of *sādhus*. Then, only, shall the unconquerable and unattainable Śrī Bhagavān be conquered by us.

Therefore, if we start analyzing the scriptures through mental speculation, we will be deprived. When our deliberation on the scriptures is motivated by the desire to enjoy or the desire to attain liberation, it is tantamount to attempting to make the scriptures subordinate to ourselves.



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It does not matter whether one is a scholar or a fool. Whatever and wherever someone is, from his own position, it is essential that he simply engage in hearing transcendental *hari-kathā* from the lips of the *sādhus*. That *hari-kathā* has descended from Vaikuntha. At present we remain in a veiled condition within this realm of *kunṭha*, or anxiety. Therefore, if we start analyzing the scriptures through mental speculation, we will be deprived. When our deliberation on the scriptures is motivated by the desire to enjoy or the desire to attain liberation, it is tantamount to attempting to make the scriptures subordinate to ourselves. But the scriptures are the direct, non-different manifestation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said:

tad viddhi pranipātena
paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānam
jñānīnas tattva-darśināḥ

Bhagavad-gītā (4.34)

Acquire this knowledge by offering prostrated obeisances to a *guru* who imparts transcendental knowledge, by asking relevant questions from him and by rendering service to him. Those who have seen the truth, the *tattva darśīs*, who are expert in the imports of *śāstra*, and the *jñānīs* who have realized Absolute Reality, will enlighten you with that knowledge.

Endeavours to become the Lord are actually just *karma-khaṇḍa*. When someone is overpowered with the intoxicating desire to become the Lord, his pretentious display of accepting the instructions of the scriptures leaves him deprived of their actual import, which never manifest for him. The real meaning of the scriptures only manifests for surrendered souls. It is written in the Vedic literature:

yasya deve parā bhaktir
yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ
prakāśante mahātmānah

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (6.23)

The meaning of this verse is that all the deepest meanings of the scriptures become manifest for those who have, equally, the same implicit faith in and devotion for the spiritual master as they do for the Lord.

Śrīman Mahaprabhu has given the instruction, *trṇād api sunīcena taror api sahiṣṇunā amāninā mānadena kīrtaniyah sadā hariḥ*. In other words, *hari-kīrtana* is only possible when one considers oneself to be lower than a blade of grass. If one harbours the desire to become even slightly distinguished, his desire will compel him to bid his performance of *kīrtana* farewell.

Question 26: Who impels the living beings to act?

Answer: Śrī Viṣṇu alone is the governor and master of all living beings. Whatever activities the living entities

perform, the Supreme Lord bestows the appropriate fruits of their actions. In accordance with the activities the living entity performed in his previous births, the Lord inspires in him the inclination to continue acting in a certain manner. Hence, the living soul is the dependent, instrumental entity, whereas the Lord is the entity who impels him to act.

Since the living being is the doer of his own acts, he becomes eligible to receive specific results and engage in further acts thereafter. But it is the Supreme Lord who impels him to enjoy those fruits, whatever they may be, and engage in further acts. In short, the Supreme Lord bestows the fruits of action and the living soul enjoys them.

Those who are averse to the Lord are impelled to act by the influence of His external, illusory potency, but His surrendered devotees are inspired to act by the Supreme Lord Himself.

Question 27: What is the difference between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Viṣṇu?

Answer: From the perspective of *tattva*, Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu are essentially one and the same. They are both the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*bhagavad-tattva*), the infinite whole (*pūrṇa-tattva*) and the fountainhead of all energies (*śaktiman-tattva*). When Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of *mādhurya* (sweetness), appears instead as the very form of *aīśvarya* (majestic splendour and opulence), then He is Viṣṇu, or Nārāyaṇa.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has a two-armed form and holds the flute. Śrī Viṣṇu has a four-armed form and holds a conch, disc, club and lotus flower. Sixty virtuous qualities⁵ reside in full within Śrī Viṣṇu, while all sixty-four qualities are present in their absolute fullness within Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa can steal the heart of Lakṣmī, but Nārāyaṇa is not able to attract the hearts of the *vraja-devīs*, who are exclusively Śrī Kṛṣṇa's beloveds. Śrī Viṣṇu is served in two-and-a-half *rasas*, namely, neutrality (*sānta*), servitorship (*dāsyā*) and a form of friendship that is partially stifled by reverence (*gaurava-sakhyā*). But Śrī Kṛṣṇa can be served in every respect and with utmost love and affection through all five *rasas*, namely, neutrality, servitorship, friendship unhindered by any feelings of inequality (*viśrambha-sakhyā*), parenthood (*vātsalyā*) and divine, transcendental

⁵ Referring to the sixty-four qualities of Godhead of which fifty are marginally present in the ordinary living beings, and fifty-five in the demigods.

amour (*mādhurya*), while regarding Him as one's own husband, one's son and so forth.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the self-originative form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*svayān-rūpa*). Just as from one lamp, all other lamps are lit, all the innumerable forms of Viṣṇu have manifested from Him alone.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of *mādhurya* (sweetness) and Śrī Viṣṇu is the embodiment of *aīśvarya* (majestic splendour and opulence). Although, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Master of all that is, He does not conceive of Himself in that way. His self-conception is as the son of Nanda, the beloved of Rādhā and so on. Śrī Viṣṇu's self-conception on the other hand, is as the Supreme Lord. Śrī Viṣṇu is served through *vidhi-mārga*, the path in which regulative principles are followed in accordance with the instructions of authentic scriptures, whereas Śrī Kṛṣṇa is served through *rāga-mārga*, the path in which service is dictated by spontaneous attraction. Due to the presence of awe and reverence within service to Śrī Viṣṇu, a mood of shyness remains in one's heart. But no shyness is exhibited by the residents of Vraja in their service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Question 28: Who is a Vaiṣṇava?

Answer: The servants of *śrīla gurudeva* are Vaiṣṇavas. Only those who have taken shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide *guru* by accepting initiation (*dīkṣā*) from him are Vaiṣṇavas. One's *guru-bhakti* is the gauge for determining the level of his *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, or his *vaiṣṇavatā* (his standing as a Vaiṣṇava). One who relinquishes his *guru* or is envious of him is not a Vaiṣṇava; he is a non-Vaiṣṇava, an atheist and a candidate for hellish life. He who is antagonistic toward the spiritual master (a *guru-drohi*) is envious of the Supreme Lord and, indeed, of the whole world. The only pure devotees (*śuddha-bhaktas*) are those devotees who are selfless and who possess *guru-niṣṭhā* (immovable faith in and dedication to *śrī guru*). Thus it is said:

*'kanaka-kāminī', 'pratiṣṭhā-bāghinī',
chāḍiyāche jāre, sei to' vaiṣṇava
sei 'anāsakta', sei 'śuddha-bhakta',
saṁsār tathā pāy parābhava*

The desire for money, women and fame is compared to a tigress. Verily, a Vaiṣṇava is he who has relinquished such desires. Only one such as him can be called detached and a pure devotee (*śuddha-bhakta*). None but him can truly overcome material existence.



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Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the self-originative form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*svayam-rūpa*). Just as from one lamp, all other lamps are lit, all the innumerable forms of Viṣṇu have manifested from Him alone.

Question 29: Is there any means of attaining spiritual welfare other than rendering service to Śrī Bhagavān?

Answer: Certainly not. Upon becoming averse to Kṛṣṇa, the living entity will pursue the path of *yoga* and accept Paramātmā as the Supreme Reality; or he will pursue the path of impersonal knowledge and consider the impersonal, undifferentiated and all-pervasive spirit (*brahma*) to be the Supreme Reality. Pursuing these paths cannot bestow any welfare upon him. In contrast, service to Śrī Bhagavān awards Bhagavān Himself. Without service to Bhagavān, the living soul cannot attain any auspiciousness. Bhagavān is not an entity we must merely attain proximity to; rather He is the object of our eternal service (*nitya-sevya vastu*).

Engaging in mundane worldly discussions is indicative of a lack of eagerness to hear topics related to Bhagavān. But the discussion of topics related to Bhagavān itself instils in us that very eagerness. If one does not achieve the state of liberation while still in his present body (*jīvan-mukta*), then he will be bound to take another birth. In unfavourable association, that is, while remaining averse to *hari-kathā*, the desire to attain deliverance from that burden – from the suffering of material existence – does not even arise. And even if the desire is present, it is motivated by the hope of gaining personal happiness.

Service to Bhagavān is not the same as the desire, or search, for personal happiness. The desire to seek personal happiness is nothing but attachment to

selfishness. Those who desire material sense enjoyment and those who desire impersonal liberation both search for their own happiness. Consequently, Bhagavān favours neither he who is engaged in sense gratification nor the false renunciant. Such persons are only favoured by the material potency of Bhagavān, which bewilders the antagonists. Bhagavān, the master of the material potency, only personally favours those who are surrendered to Him in every respect and who are engaged in searching for ways to please Him.

We must gain emancipation by becoming *guru-devatātmā* – he who perceives his *guru* as his Lord and as dear as his very soul – and thereby serving *śrī guru* without duplicity. Only then will we be able to achieve pure and sublime service. This most elevated transcendental service cannot be obtained unless one becomes liberated.

We must constantly engage in chanting the holy names under the guidance of *śrī guru*. We must always remember that *kṛṣṇa-bhajana* is constituted solely of *nāma-bhajana*⁶. Indeed, one will achieve all perfection by serving the holy name (*śrī nāma*). The subject matter of the topmost realm of *bhajana* can only be comprehended by serving *śrī nāma*.



Translated from Śrila Prabhupādera Upadeśāmṛta
Questions re-numbered for the monthly on-line editions

6 The term *bhajana*, in the mature state, refers to a profound condition of divine internal worship wherein the liberated soul can engage in direct service to the Supreme Lord.

The Nature of True Devotees

by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda

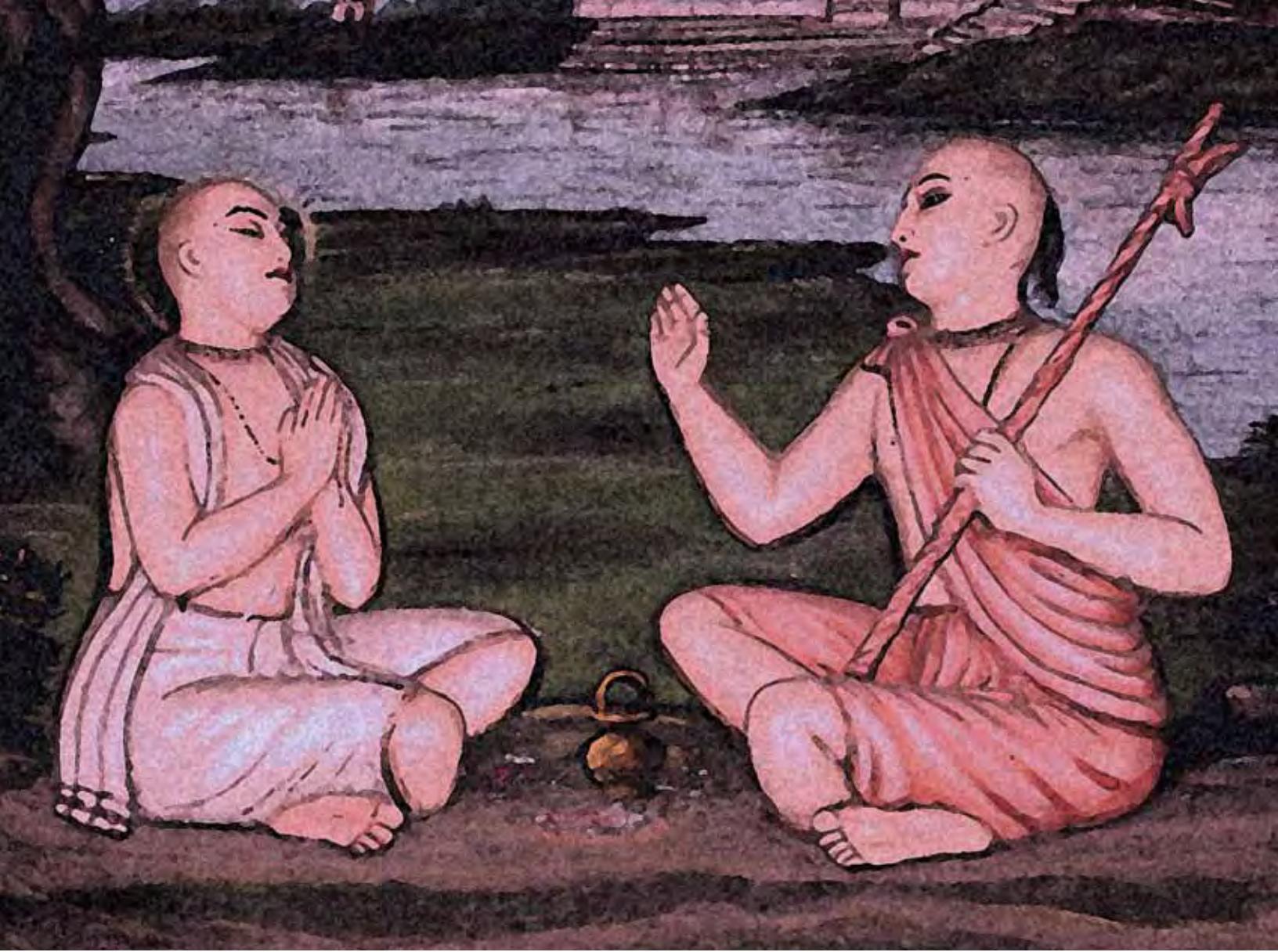
Development of devotion to God is attained by associating with those who serve both Him and His devotees. They have made service to God the very essence of their life. They have made the narrations of the names, appearance, attributes and sports of God the mainstay of their existence, and they are always engaged in discoursing about them.

Not only is there a great difference between how the common man deliberates upon God and how the devotee deliberates upon Him, but the very natures of these two kinds of deliberation are quite opposite. Among the common people, many are inclined to worship God, whom they know to be the giver of mundane and celestial pleasure and happiness. Those who are more intelligent however – that is, those who outwardly present themselves as renunciants but remain the topmost enjoyers at heart – pretend to worship God

with the purpose of becoming equal to God, who is the Supreme Enjoyer, and merging in Him.

Those situated midway between these two classes worship God with the intention of acquiring the eight modes of supernatural power – such as the power to become smaller than an atom and the power to become weightless – in order to fulfil their own desires. Although they pretentiously show themselves to be worshippers of God, they never admit the eternity of God's names, appearance and so forth. They regard the Supreme Master of all to be governed by *karma*. These so-called worshippers do not serve God with the particular aim of serving and pleasing Him. On the contrary, they make the Lord serve them.

The nature of true devotees is different from theirs. They do not expect, nor do they regard as necessary, the attainment of pleasure for the body and home in this



world or in the next. Nor do they regard as important the attainment of emancipation, which is so highly praised as the ultimate attainment for man. True devotees serve God by their very nature, by their every thought and by every sentiment of their heart. This strong propensity in them does not yield to any obstruction but runs with impetuosity, forcibly removing all the obstacles before it. It is just like the swift and turbulent current of the river Gaṅgā, which rapidly runs towards the sea, inundating all high and low resistance, undergoing no disaster and never abating, at any point, to take rest.

The devotees are ever engaged in the service of God. No tendency towards anything else, no other thought or deed besides that service, finds any opportunity to cast its shadow over the souls of those *bhakti-yogīs*, who are incessantly communing with God and are entirely dedicated to Him. Out of pure love, the devoted

servitors of God are ever engaged in offering service to Him and to His devotees. They have no vitality to devote to their bodies; to those who are related to their bodies like their wives or sons; to their home; to all those who are related to these; to domestic beasts and birds; or to their occupation, class and so forth.

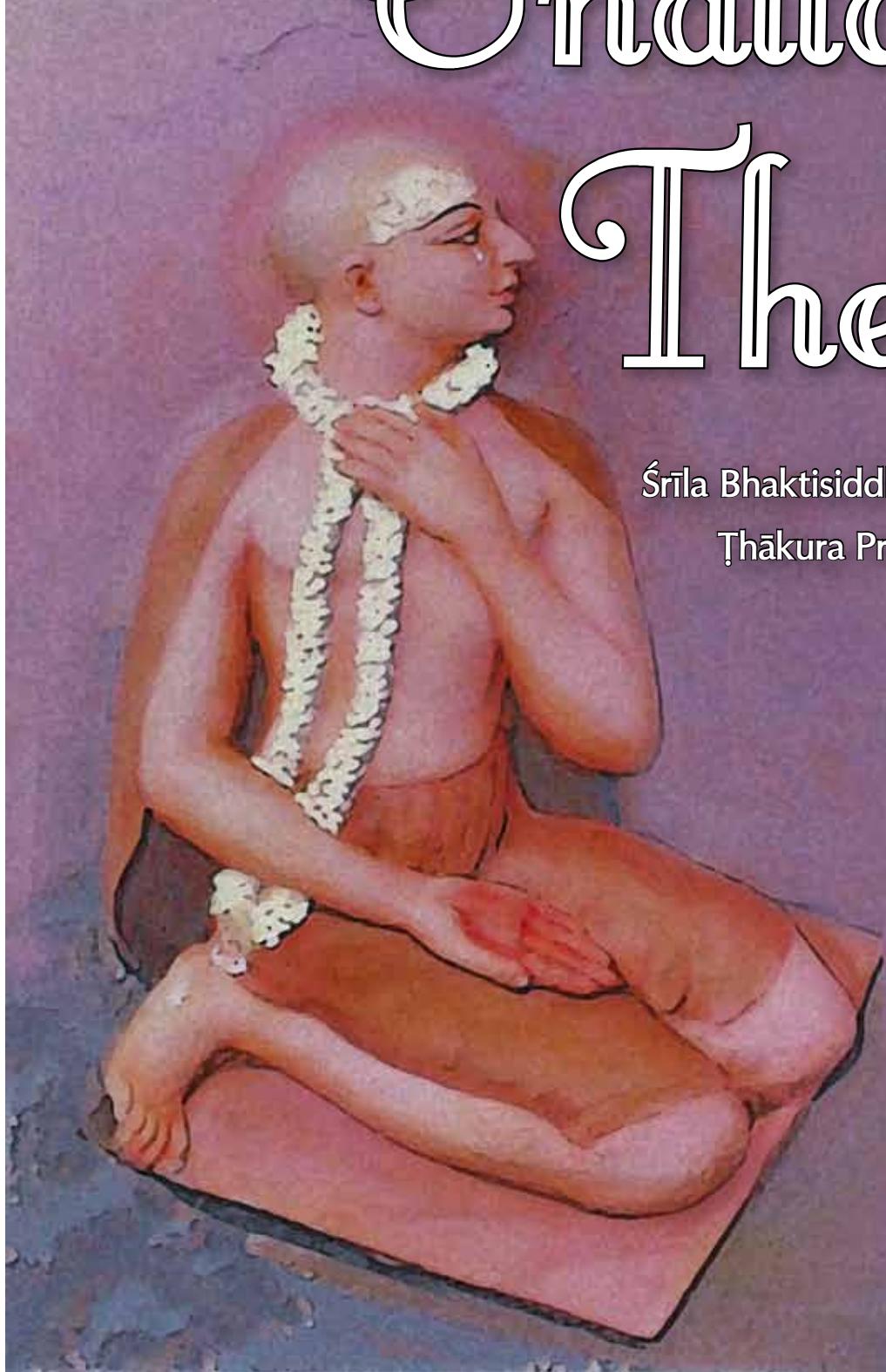
Having fallen in love with the Lord of their life, who is the very life of their lives and the life of all, they have surrendered themselves to Him, with all their energy. Such devotees, dedicating their very selves to God, have made Him alone the quintessence of all their ambitions. And He, too, having been arrested by their devotion, has made them His essential companions, even though He Himself is the most essential Being for all.



Adapted from *The Gaudiya* Volume 25, Number 5

Unalloyed Theism

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī^{THĀKURA PRABHUPĀDA}



*A*mong all the sentient entities who interact with this phenomenal world, man holds the supreme position, and he entertains the hope of remaining in such a position into the future, even after the transmutation of his present tabernacle. The quality of rationality is associated with man, who harbours the hope that, as much as possible, he may use his faculty of discrimination in the most appropriate fashion.

We know we are dependent upon other rational entities for our own rational activities to find real display. Such dependence is an inseparable element of our being. Yet, in spite of that, our ego ceaselessly tries to dispel all the discomforts of the mundane atmosphere by compelling us to exercise some intrinsic power of our own.

We are all endowed with material senses, and these have no other predilection than to secure felicities in every transaction. Indeed, when we examine an individual case, we find that the impetus to gratify our senses is our principal characteristic. This feature, found in so many of us, often promotes further desires to seek out our own gratification from our fellows in this world. When, in search of sensuous pleasures, we instead put ourselves into difficulty and expect others to come to our aid, then we ought, thereafter, to make some effort to contribute to social harmony. And yet, if we suppress our proclivity to encroach upon our friends and fellows in this world, we cannot live. Still, the social mandate to control our senses dominates all of our decisions by virtue of our concern for civic principles. Hence, while autonomy is felt as a desirable factor for happiness in life, we find ourselves quite restricted in our movements.



We must now depend upon the Absolute to guide us toward a harmonious solution to this quandary. The pressure of our need for happiness obliges us to rationally reflect upon the merits and demerits of our situation. In such rational reflection, we take notice that all phenomenal representations can be traced to some original source. Yet even then, we become dissatisfied with the notion that this universal, demonstrative aspect is itself a holy shelter, full of all the supplies we need. We therefore revert to our previous mode of rational reflection in an attempt to uncover the still hidden treasure behind all exoteric manifestations.

The esoteric fountainhead perpetually supersedes the handicaps of the phenomenal region. Hence, when he comes before our vision, we are compelled to consider His situation: He is eternal, blissful knowledge, transcendent to all regions of mental speculation.

Nevertheless, upon hearing that this Oversoul proclaims to incorporate none but pure, uncontaminated souls into the midst of His harmonious plane, we may become agitated by the subsequent speculations of our mind:

"Why should that Supreme Soul, the principal Transcendental Object, not imbibe the all-encompassing conception? That is to say, why should He not include both non-matter and matter, both the part and the whole, and why should He not incorporate both ends of the continuum of variegated realities?"

Yet, the fact is, this very same faculty of our mind for speculating will also lead us to give credence to the theory that God is identical with everything, a theory of which the principal trait is total negation of every kind of phenomena.

Individuation is a necessary element in me, as it is in everyone. I find that the individual situations of all of us are the subject matter of our reciprocal activities. Such individual situations are numerous, and with their varied dispositions within the scope of our present experience of phenomenal existence, they are found to be rapturous. Should there not be some underlying bond amidst such a multitude of positions? To accomplish the same, we often jump into ideas of impersonal reality and dissociative relativities.

Perceiving absolute oneness in this way, mundane persons thus demonstrate the conceited apathy innate in their conception, which is tantamount to jealousy of the position of the Absolute Being. Just to pacify them, the Absolute Being then presents them with His aspect of infinitude, which is beyond all mundane, restrictive designations in terms of time and space. Factually, our restricted perspective in relation to the phenomenal domain should not be imposed on the Personality of a thoroughly Independent Integer. The Personality of Godhead is to be humbly approached, not subjected to our sensuous inspection, as though He were an accused in the court. We should accept that all existences are, and ought to be, His own. This method of approach is known as unalloyed theism.



Adapted from *The Gaudiya* Volume 25, Number 10



What Śrī

The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya has asked all sections of the people of this world not to tamper with or mutilate the Absolute Truth with their crippled attempts to regulate Him, but rather to approach Him with an absolutely clean and sincere heart, in which His own feature will be revealed. He may then show His various manifestive aspects in accordance with the eligibility of the person approaching him.

The Supreme Lord has mercifully disclosed the name of the true object of pure theism: "Śrī Kṛṣṇa". The conception of an impersonal God, devoid of all attributes and stripped of all varieties of potency, is included in the conception of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as one of His partial features where all sorts of perceptible attributes are eliminated.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya has lucidly demonstrated to the people what He meant by theism. We find that He has thoroughly revealed to us the conception of various types of transcendental, unalloyed service to the Supreme Absolute Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as well as a special type of service which was hitherto quite unknown to theists. He has revealed that special type of service to people everywhere.

Theism, before He disclosed this, was conceived as being confined exclusively to reverence and regulative principles. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya has taught us that we may approach Śrī Kṛṣṇa with unconditional service in all sorts of ways, and He has shown us the excellence of the most confidential relationship between Godhead and human souls in comparison to other relationships with Him. Until His time, we were quite familiar with the idea of approaching Śrī Kṛṣṇa only through the other principles of devotion, simply by worshipping Him, leaving aside the most attractive aspect of rendering service to the Lord.

Caitanya Meant by Theism

by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda

The omnipotence and omniscience of the Supreme, which are His secondary aspects, had been prominent in the conception of theists. As such, we had been thinking that service to the object of our worship should be performed by the upper part of the body and that the lower part of our transcendental eternal body¹ could not possibly offer any acceptable service to the Beloved. We had been neglecting our existence as a transcendental, albeit infinitesimal, entity called the ‘soul’ residing within the external frame and within the astral body.

Consequently, up to that time, we had been confounding ourselves with a philosophy that was no more than mental speculation. We were perpetually restricted by external views of the world and we avoided cognizance of our pure identity, which is meant for rendering eternal service to He who is the Transcendental Object, the Supreme Sentient Being, and the eternal Over-Soul. The level of theism that we had reached at that time was therefore not sufficiently elevated, and higher aspects of service to the Lord, such as serving Godhead as a close and confidential friend, as a son, and as a consort, were thus hidden from us.

Thus we had merely been keeping transitory relationships with the perishable objects of this world. But our theism should not restrict our vision and cause us to ignore the confidential service which can be rendered by the free human soul to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Until now, we were

not convinced about the existence of the Over-soul and His existential position – that Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone, in all His aspects, should be the object of our devotion.

We find that unless the Supreme Absolute, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, kindly graces us by becoming the willing recipient of our service, we cannot render all varieties of confidential service to Him. And in any other aspect of Kṛṣṇa, such as Matsya, Varāha, Nṛsiṁha, Vāmana and Rāma, the depth of our reverential activities is rather limited.

Here, even in this perverted world, people can offer their confidential services in any of the five *rasas*². Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and no other, is the centre, the very fountainhead of all divinity whom we can lovingly satisfy with all aspects of our confidential service.

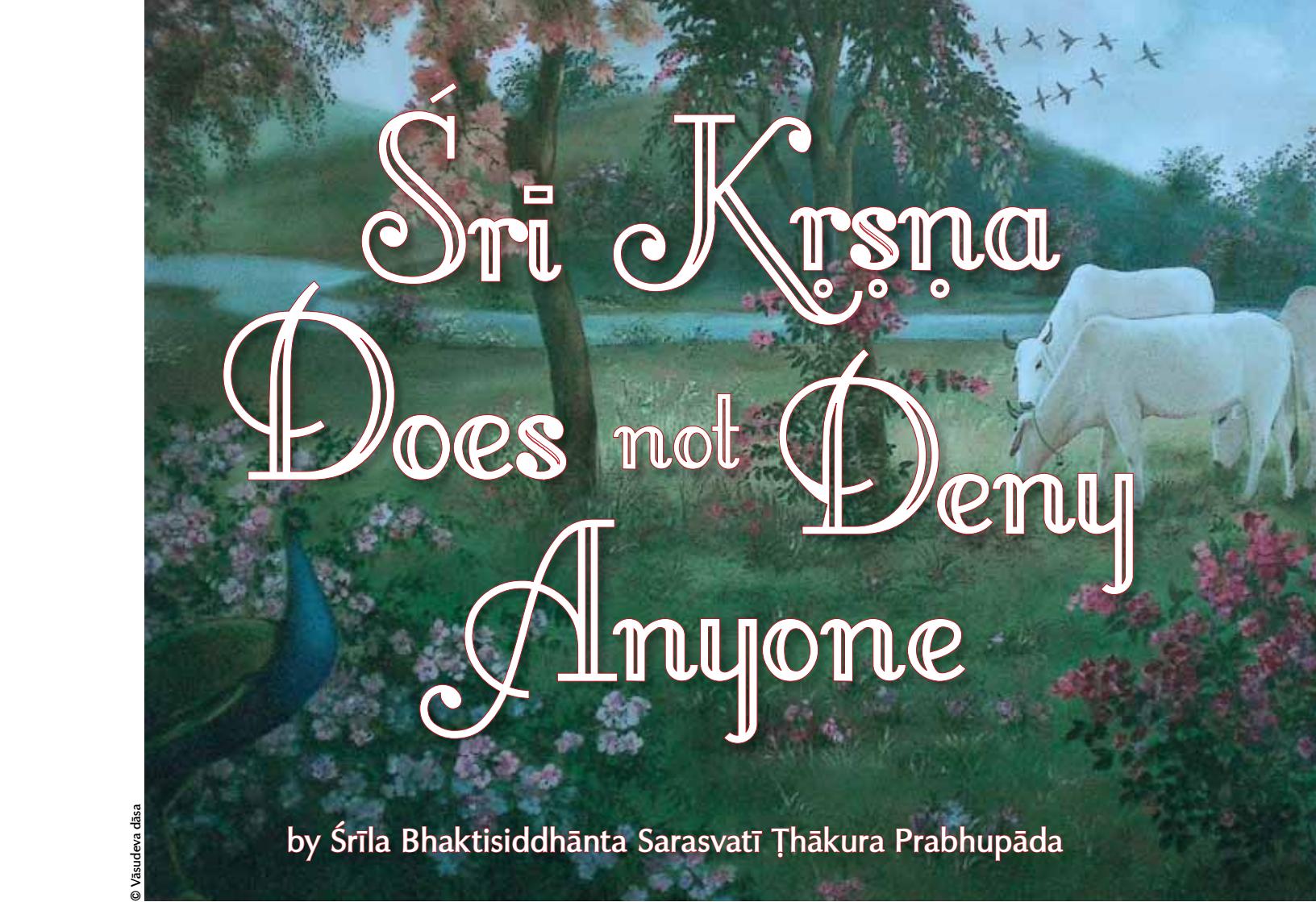
Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti*, that is, He is the fountainhead of all *rasas*, and we can approach Him in any one of His five different reciprocal features. By performing all our activities for Him with the body of our transcendental soul, we can offer Him our eternal service in one of these five features; whereas, in reciprocation with other forms of Godhead, we cannot offer such confidential service.



Adapted from *The Gaudiya* Volume 25, Number 11

1 The transcendental eternal body is called the *aprakṛta siddhadeha*. It is comprised entirely of *sat-cit-ānanda* (eternity, knowledge and bliss) and therefore has no connection with gross or subtle matter.

2 The five *rasas*, or the five overwhelmingly nectarean modes of identity in eternal service, are (1) *śānta-rasa*, the mood of serene reverence or passive, but unwavering faith in Godhead; (2) *dāsy-a-rasa*, the mood of loving service; (3) *sakhya-rasa*, the mood of deep camaraderie; (4) *vātsalya-rasa*, the mood of unconditional nurturance as in a mother to her dependent child; (5) *mādhurya-rasa*, the mood of immaculate, transcendent and selfless amour.



Śrī Kṛṣṇa Does not Deny Anyone

by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda

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*I*n the case of Lord Rāmacandra, we cannot offer our services in all the five different aspects. He cannot stand as our Consort, because if He were to do so, Sītā might attest that her devoted husband Rāmacandra had crossed the limits of His own ethical principles. Moreover, Sītā would never allow any other soul the privilege of rendering that sort of service to Rāmacandra.

We find the best example of this in the Dañḍakāraṇya ṛṣis who approached Rāmacandra. Rāmacandra did not accept them because, for one, they had male forms, and second, He was devoted to only one wife. In other words, for fear of violating His ethical principles He could not accept service in the mode of consort-hood from them. While Rāmacandra could only accept services in modes other than consort-hood from Lakṣmaṇa and others, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is eternally lovable, is very naturally referred to as Bahu-Vallabha, the dear-most lover of many.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa can accommodate hundreds of dependents as His consorts, whereas Rāmacandra can only welcome dependents in four modes – namely, His parents; His

brothers and friends; His servants; and the neutral subjects of His realm, who render unalloyed service to Him. All others, except Sītā, are barred from offering any confidential, loving service to Rāmacandra as His consort.

But in Śrī Kṛṣṇa we find that there is no such restriction. Every soul can offer all sorts of unalloyed confidential services to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, we find that Śrī Kṛṣṇa verily welcomes every soul; He does not deny anyone.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa personally always wants His devotees to accept Him in the mode of consort-hood – indeed, He admits every servant of His who has truly got the capacity to approach Him in any of these most exalted moods and positions – and yet He never allows any of His temporary pseudo-servants to keep the corresponding sorts of mundane relationships with each other. The progress of any soul toward such confidential, loving services to the Over-soul is never hindered, provided the Lord is convinced that, remaining ever subservient



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to His Predominated Counter-Whole, that soul can truly offer this kind of service to Him.

Truly, Śrī Kṛṣṇa never restrains us from rendering any sort of confidential, loving service that, in our unconditioned stage, we are bent upon offering Him. However, we would be barred from offering such services to Him in His other aspects, either because our mental approach would then be somehow tainted or because it would have been arrived at through flawed speculations.

If we independent souls give up the kind of worship that emerges from our own mental speculations – if we can have a wider and larger scope – then we can easily approach the Transcendental Being with all of our earnest and sincere endeavours. And He shall not deny anyone nor allow anyone to continue engagements that are meant for some other aspect of Him, inasmuch as He is the one who shall always enchant our soul.

So we should scrutinize most minutely whether we should at all utilize and engage some limbs for our

personal benefits and some portion of our transcendental body for Godhead! But the real truth is that all of our engagements – the whole of our occupation – may be engaged for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We do not have this rarest fortune, the fortune of engaging our whole being in such pure perfection, in any other aspect of Godhead.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya has not taught us any anthropomorphic concept. Ordinary people might think that they can indulge in carrying conceptualizations born from the material nature of this world into that transcendental realm, but such anthropomorphic ideas are never enjoined or entertained by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

All we must know is that Godhead is the full, complete and perfect being and that no partial or crippled features are anywhere to be found in His person. We must not think that all that we have in this world – all that might be feasible or practicable or even ethical here – should be carried along with us to a region where imperfect acquisitions are not wanted. We have no such ambition.

 Adapted from *The Gaudiya* Volume 25, Number 12

The



© Vāsudeva dāsa

Srī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya told us that we should first acquire self-determination, without which we will mistake the mind for the soul. Mind is quite different from soul. The mind conducts all the activities of the physical plane. It receives impressions from nature through the medium of the senses and through the functions of our body, that is, through the mind's interfacing with external objects, which are made of matter.

Although we are habitually occupied with matter, when we begin to study theism, that is, when we enquire about the actual figure of Godhead, we find within the four seed verses of *Śrimad-Bhāgavatam* (*catuh-slokī Bhāgavatam*) the words that the Absolute Fountainhead spoke to Lord Brahmā, the creator of this material universe:

"If I am to bestow My mercy upon anyone, I must reveal Myself to him fully. Those with wayward aspirations and minds that tend to speculate will be debarred from attaining unobscured perception of My actual size, figure and colour. If I do not

One Absolute

by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda

confer My mercy upon them, they will simply miss Me all together."

In light of this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya has disparaged all mundane thinkers, who are busy with grand philosophies or diligently adhering to their mundane ethics, along with all those who propagate their own humanitarian enterprises.

We find in the writings of our *ācārya*'s that, in essence, "No one should wrongly consider that when we speak of Śrī Kṛṣṇa we are speaking of an entity who is wholly different from Śrī Rāmacandra. The fact that we talk of Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not mean we are differentiating between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rāmacandra, for Śrī Rāmacandra and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are not essentially different entities. They are identical. But just as in this world, the perverted reflection of the transcendental plane, we find that a single man considers himself to be the father of one person, the son of another and the physician of someone else, in the transcendental realm, also, we find that the same, one Absolute appears in manifold aspects."

So let no one imagine that we are talking of wholly different objects when we mention the *avatāras*. Vāsudeva is the same as Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa is identical with Sītā-Rāma. Sītā-Rāma is the same as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. We do not find any differences between Them. There should not be any controversy in this matter, and, aside from their respective planes of

rasa, there is no scope to draw a distinction between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rāma.



We simply want to appreciate the respective positions of the One Absolute, and we have no ambition to change our position. Still, we must strive to render all possible confidential services to the Over-soul, and there is no harm in this. Yet in relation to Rāmacandra we find that in one kind of worship all of our activities cannot be one hundred percent engaged for Him. In another only some portion of our activities are engaged in serving the entity of our adoration, while the other portion is kept aside for our selfish, personal use. These kinds of worship are not perfectly selfless.

We often find in this world that a man believes himself to be the master of a range of subordinate properties. He proclaims, 'I have many servants', 'I have a large estate', 'I have great learning', and so forth. It would not really be compatible with human nature were a man to confine himself to a single aspect of an entity, for then he would have nothing to do with the other aspects of that same entity.

If we were to cast aside all of that One Integer's awe-inspiring and majestic attributes apart from His absolute blissfulness and His absolute ecstatic beauty, we would be known to have advanced quite far in our theistic

aspirations for that Fullest Form. So when we approach Śrī Kṛṣṇa we find that all sorts of aspects are fully in Him and we can offer all sorts of confidential services to Him, with our transcendental and eternal body. We can offer ourselves to Him in all ways with the closest intimacy.

We must not think that restricting ourselves to a particular aspect shall result in a quarrel with someone involved in another school of thought or philosophy, or that it shall result in some other religious controversy. There shall be little scope for that since our attention should, at all times, be one hundred percent devoted to Him and His Counter Whole. This is the general outline of the teachings of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

Lord Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is the combined personality of the predominating and predominated moieties of the Absolute. We, the individual souls, are endowed with a mixed aptitude. Our consciousness possesses a two-fold potentiality. It becomes cognizant of material categories, but it is open to the influence of the spiritual as distinguished from the mundane. Lord Caitanya is our only support and the source of our animation. He is the only object of our worship. As a matter of fact, every activity of ours owes its possibility and existence to His initiative and works as a natural result of His own activities.

Lord Caitanya displays the pastime of seeking Himself. All through His manifestation, He is found most anxiously devoted to the exclusive quest for the Absolute Godhead, His predominating Moiety, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We, His eternal protégés, are conditioned to follow His lead in this matter. And if we do follow Him, we shall be doing the right thing. By following Him we will obtain knowledge of the realm of the Absolute. We will no longer have to remain trapped within the narrow scope of the material dimensions.

Yet we are handicapped by our mixed aptitude. We have the option of becoming involved with the spiritual but we also have the option of meddling with the material. As soon as we indulge this mixed aptitude by mistaking it to be our real function, our progress

toward the Absolute is obstructed and we find ourselves subjected, for the most part, to insurmountable disqualifications. These disqualifications have been analyzed and classified under four groups: the tendency to commit mistakes (*bhraṇa*), inadvertence (*pramāda*), deception (*vipralipsā*) and limited, imperfect senses (*karaṇāpāṭava*). These are very serious defects. They make it impossible for us to obtain even a glimpse of transcendence. Hence there arises the compelling necessity of seeking the help of those who are free from those defects.

The functioning of our present senses does not give us any knowledge of the Whole Truth. On the contrary, it always keeps us away from the full, eternal, blissful Being. We are prevented from full access to uninterrupted existence, uninterrupted knowledge and uninterrupted bliss. Although these constitute the reality to be gained by the exercise of our present facilities, we obtain instead the so-called knowledge of the things of this world. We perceive matter alone, and we can imagine a state of material negation, yet neither of these is Reality proper.

We cannot avoid the existence of distinctions, but we shall necessarily entertain any thesis we may encounter regarding distinctive entities, under the operation of the four-fold defects

mentioned above. It is, however, incumbent on us to try to be perfectly free from those defects. Methods based on sense-experience are useless for this end, for they can never free us from those defects.

Those who rely upon the resources of mind express themselves through language. The words exchanged between such people are more or less defective and mutually contradictory. The experience of a particular moment is different from true experience. We are trying to gain admission into the realm of true experience, and we hanker to make progress in such experience. It is our purpose thereby to fall in love with the Real Entity. This is the supreme goal.



Adapted from *The Gaudiya* Volume 26, Number 3–4

The Means of Attaining Welfare When Sādhu-saṅga is Far Away

a letter by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda

Śrī Caitanya Maṭha

Śrī Māyāpura

22nd December 1927

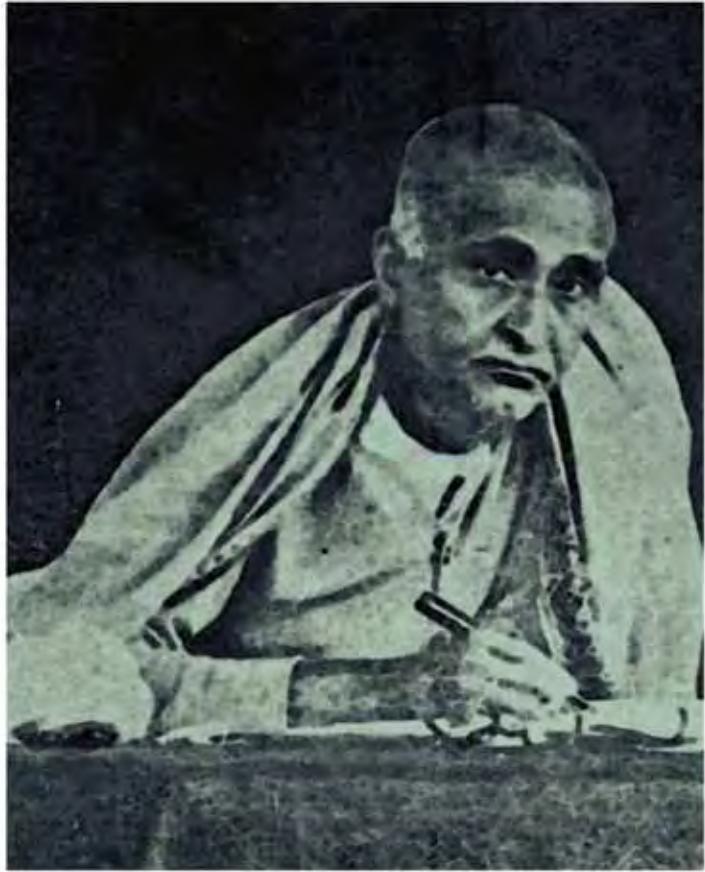
[In the letter published in *Śrīla Prabhupadera Patrāvalī*, the recipient was kept anonymous.]

Yesterday, I received your letter from [the name of the messenger was also kept anonymous]. I also received a letter from you many days ago, even before I went to the Western districts, but I could not reply to it in time due to my travels there. You can find out about the festivals and programmes that were held in various places in the Western districts by reading the *Gauḍīya*¹ magazine or by hearing from the devotees. Righteous people everywhere are becoming joyful and satisfied by hearing the message of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.

For the devotees of Bhagavān, Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma is a place of utmost reverence. Every place in this *dhāma* awakens remembrance of Bhagavān within one's heart. For this reason, I especially desire to live here for a few more days. But, according to what is necessary for the sake of service to Śrī Hari, I shall have to travel to other places, like Calcutta.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu is extremely merciful. He has therefore arranged that so many devotees are present even in a place like Calcutta. In Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha,

.....
1 *Gauḍīya* was a weekly periodical published in Bengali. It was founded by Śrīla Prabhupāda and boldly propounded the *rūpānuga gauḍīya* conception.



If in this world,
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keep us aloof from
worldly pain.

harikathā (discussion of Lord Hari) flows constantly and everyone has become intoxicated by their intense engagement in service. It is most appropriate for me to thoroughly embrace such association for the rest of my life, like when Śrī Parīkṣit Mahārāja heard *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for the last days of his life. In these last days of my life, a place devoid of *harikathā*, even if it were occupied by all my kith and kin and full of all material comforts, seems utterly undesirable to me. By the mercy of the Supreme Lord, seeing how the inclination to devotedly serve Bhagavān is present within all the *māthas*, I constantly think of the benevolence of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.

I once spent my life preferring to drink the happiness that is derived from the objects of material sense perception, but today, wherever I go, I am able to serve Śrī Bhagavān and gain the association of His devotees. By spending however many days we have left of our lives like this, we shall never live in misery by becoming averse to Śrī Hari.

You are not hearing enough *harikathā* from the lips of the devotees, who are inclined toward serving Śrī Bhagavān and who are rapt in *hari-bhajana*. Because of this, you do not appreciate your good fortune. However, the fact that you constantly remain inclined to serve Śrī Hari keeps you aloof from adverse association. When you are on your own, you should always read the *Gaudīya* and the devotional literatures written by other Vaiṣṇavas. This will, in itself, enable you to reap the benefit of listening to *harikathā* from the lips of the devotees.



While living on this earth, we do not get the direct association of many devotees from the transcendental realm. But because the conversations and pastimes of the devotees who were present during the manifest pastimes of Śrīman Mahāprabhu perpetually exist in the form of sacred texts (*granthas*) and sound vibration (*śabda*), or words, we do not feel so much pain in our worldly troubles. If in this world, we live amidst the discussion and message of the transcendental world, our reflections on that message will keep us aloof from worldly pain. No matter where you find yourself, that divine *harikathā* will never abandon you. To be sure, you will even remember Bhagavān

and comprehend the topic of *bhakti* within all the things of this world.

By the sublime will of the Lord I may again have the opportunity to visit all these places in the Western districts and you would again get the chance to listen to *harikathā*. But it is certainly appropriate for a devotee to forget his misery and live in whatever condition Bhagavān is pleased to keep him in.

The ordinary people of this material world cannot understand the divine message of Bhagavān – of Śrīman Mahāprabhu – or of the transcendent nature and qualities of His devotees. Only when the inclination to serve Bhagavān arises in one's heart can one remember Śrī Hari under all circumstances.

Since you are always endeavouring for your spiritual welfare, Bhagavān is manifesting all of His transcendental narrations, the message of Godhead, within your heart through the medium of the devotional literatures.

It is written in *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata*:

yata dekha vaiṣṇavera
vyavahāra duḥkha
niścaya jāniha sei
parānanda sukha

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya-khaṇḍa (9.240)

Know this for certain: whatever you may perceive as ordinary misery in a Vaiṣṇava is in fact his greatest joy.

So that He may test us, within this world Bhagavān always remains hidden. Our superficial perception can only diminish by comprehending His presence underlying everything.

adya 'pi sei līlā kare gaura-rāya
kauna kauna bhagyavane dekhibāre pāya

Even today, Gaura-rāya is performing His pastimes, but only a few, most fortunate souls can see them.

When will that most fortunate day come for us when we all become travellers on the path of *bhakti* by

following in the footsteps of Śrī Gaurasundara in every respect?

This world is but a place where the Supreme Lord examines us. To excel in that examination one must hear *kirtana* of Hari performed by His devotees. And you are hearing that *kirtana* through the medium of devotional literature. Therefore, it is by no means appropriate for you to consider yourself deprived.

Once, a long time ago, Hiranyaśaṅku declared everywhere that Bhagavān does not exist in this world. On many occasions he brutally confronted his son Prahlāda in an attempt to force him to accept this conclusion. But then Śrī Nṛsiṁhadeva emerged from within a pillar, and generated spiritual welfare for Hiranyaśaṅku and the entire world. The devotees of the Lord perceive their Lord at all times and in all things, but those who are envious of Him cannot even comprehend that He exists at all.

We who are situated somewhere in between are sometimes inclined towards devotional service to Hari, but the very next moment we absorb ourselves in sense gratification. Due solely to our desire to engage in devotional service, we will gradually

escape our entanglement in all forms of material sense enjoyment. Fleeting happiness and distress is always present in mundane sense gratification, but devotional service, *bhakti*, which is eternal, gives bliss to Bhagavān. With the aim of giving that bliss to Bhagavān, we can remain perpetually engaged in His service.

I am not sure whether or not you will get any instantaneous benefit by reading this detailed letter. My communication skills are extremely poor. Since I am not able to make everything understandable to everyone, I often remain silent.

Here in Śrī Caitanya Maṭha all the activities have begun that are necessary before the commencement of the festival.

Your eternal well-wisher
Śrī Siddhānta Sarasvatī

 Translated from *Śrīla Prabhupādāra Patrāvalī*

Appearing in English for the first time

Śrī Bhagavān is not for the Weak-hearted

A letter from
Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna
Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja



Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha
Kāṁsa Tīla, Mathurā
November 23, 1960

śrī śrī guru gaurāṅga jayataḥ!

[In the letter published in *Gauḍīya Patrikā*, the recipient was kept anonymous.]

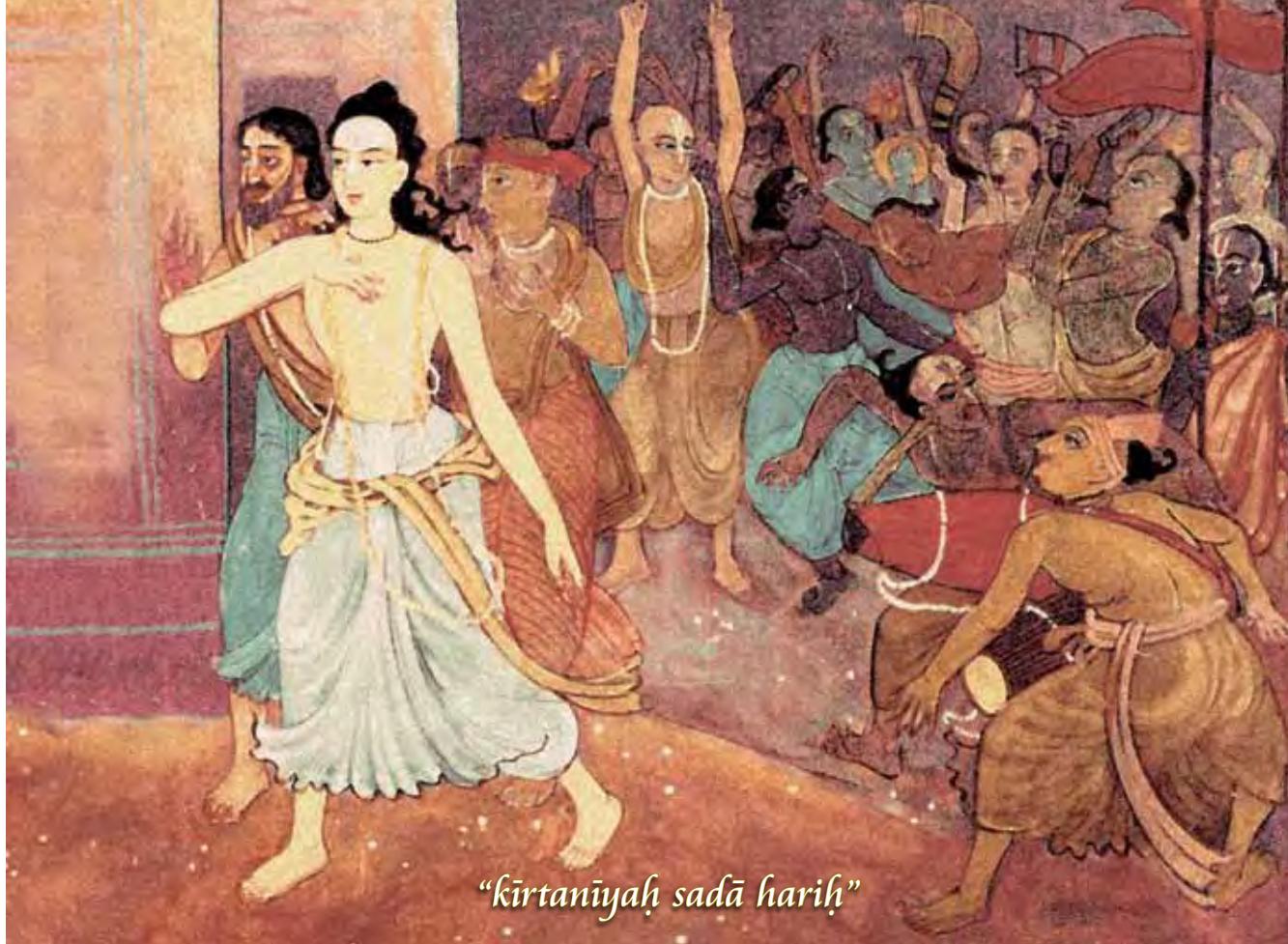
I have received your letters dated October 17 and November 14 and became especially pleased to learn from them that you are inclined to receive training in accordance with the principles enunciated in the revealed scriptures.

Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Gaurasundara has said, “*kīrtanīyah sadā hariḥ* – always chant the glories of Śrī Hari.” And *sāstra* states, “*kalau tadā-hari-kīrtanāt* – in the age of Kali, deliverance is only achieved by performing *hari-kīrtana*.”

The significance of these statements is that the only way to become freed from material bondage is through the culture of *hari-kīrtana*. That is to say, only by discussing the glories and message of Śrī Hari can all living beings become liberated and thus qualified to serve Śrī Bhagavān.

It is a source of deep happiness for me that you are always performing *kīrtana* by discussing *hari-kathā* with everyone, in a way that is appropriate according to time, place and circumstance. You must fearlessly speak the message of Śrī Hari.

In the teachings of Śrīman Mahāprabhu we will not find even the slightest trace of diversion from scripture, nor any poor logic or inconsistency. All other propagators of religion – namely so-called religious *sampradāyas* (schools of thought) and their *ācāryas* (chief preceptors) – have attained, or yearn to attain, fame and reputation in modern society by presenting their fanciful speculations, whether narrow or broad. But their opinions oppose the conclusions of



“kīrtanīyah sadā hariḥ”

scripture and lack logic. Therefore, it is absolutely essential to speak the truth courageously.

Śrī Bhagavān is not for the weak-hearted. In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*(1.6.4) it has been said, “*nāyamātmā balahinena labhyāḥ* – The Absolute Reality, that Supreme Soul, is not accessible to those who have no spiritual strength.” But cowards manipulate religion with false interpretations, proclaiming “all are correct, all are correct,” and thus reveal the feebleness of their conception of *bhajana*. You must rigorously protest against these spurious assertions. If necessary, I am personally ready to discuss this in an open forum.

You may inquire of those who attempt to assert that the featureless, impersonal *brahma* – that is, the undifferentiated, all-pervading spirit – is the Supreme Absolute Truth (*para-tattva*), “Why is it so often seen in scripture that the word *brahma* has been prefixed with *para* (Supreme Absolute)?” The name Para-brahma is employed to indicate a higher *tattva*, or existential truth, than just impersonal *brahma*. In other words, it points us toward the Supreme, Absolute Entity. Hence, impersonal *brahma* is not *para-tattva*, the Supreme Absolute Truth. I will discuss this with you further when we meet.

Knowledge of impersonal *brahma* is knowledge of the negated aspect of Bhagavān; while knowledge of

Bhagavān, the Supreme Person Himself, is knowledge of the positive aspect. Ideas pertaining to negation have no intrinsic value. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself spoke *Bhagavad-gītā*, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself is the refuge of the all-pervading spirit (*brahma*): “*brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham* – I am the basis and shelter of *brahma*” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 14.27). You ought to make people thoroughly understand this statement.

The word *viṣṇu* appears in many places throughout the Vedas and every single *brāhmaṇa* priest utters this transcendental name every time he sanctifies himself with water. Still, when demoniac people hear the name Viṣṇu, they are filled with fear. I cannot fully elaborate on this topic within the scope of this letter.

Regarding your last question, if someone wants to enter worldly life, he must surely gain some kind of knowledge for the sake of earning his livelihood. But the topmost knowledge, of course, is all-auspicious, spiritual knowledge.

I conclude here.

With blessings,
Śrī Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava

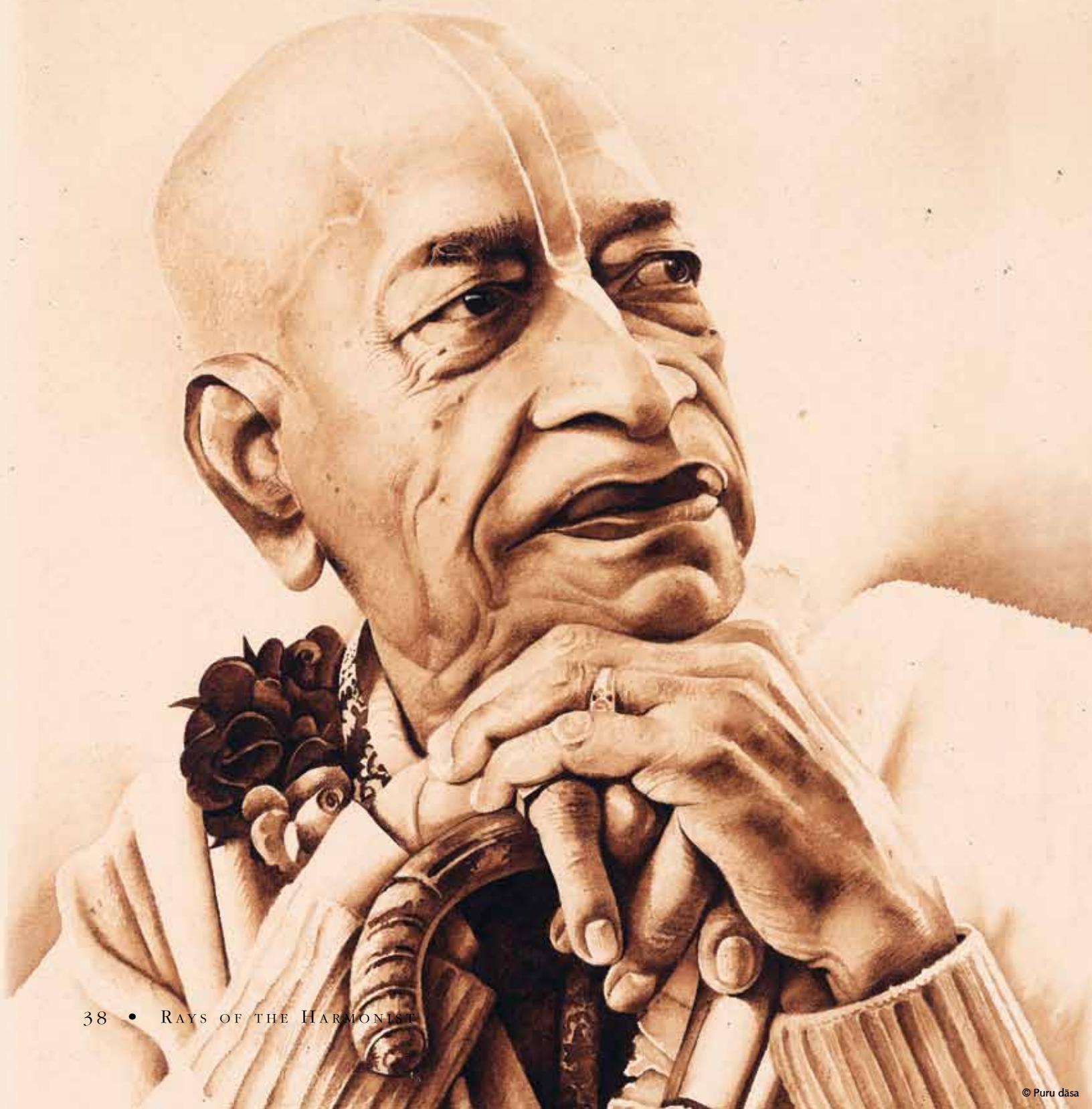


Translated from *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā* Year 28, Issue 3

Appearing in English for the first time

IS HUMAN MISERY A PASTIME OF GOD?

by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja



 Is God responsible for all the varieties of misery that man must face, or not?"

When a *svāmī*, who is a regular visitor to Delhi, was asked this question by the good Dr. Sharma, he presented his answer in front of everyone in the assembly:

"The miseries visible in human life, whatever they may be, are all a pastime of the Lord."

Dr. Sharma lives and practises medicine in Delhi. He is a keen seeker of truth and an avid reader of our *Back to Godhead* magazine; and he often inquires from me on a variety of topics. The good doctor found the *svāmī's* answer to his question completely unsatisfying.

He countered by saying that if all of a person's activities are to be considered a pastime of the Lord, then why is it said that man must experience the results of his own pious and sinful activities?

When the *svāmī* attempted to justify his explanation simply by repeating the same phrase, "It is all a pastime of the Lord," Dr. Sharma exclaimed, in the midst of that assembly, "I am not satisfied with your answer." The common people in the audience were simply listening to their arguments. No one could understand the essence of the topic, nor did anyone even try to understand it.

On many occasions we, too, come across this question, which is ever stirring in the human mind:

"Why did God create so much misery in this world? Is it all His pastime?"

The truth, though, is quite different from what this question implies.

Among all the meaningless obstacles that monists have created in this world by conceiving of God and the living entity as existing in total oneness, none is more severe than the introduction of this particular type of doubt.

The activities of souls that are imprisoned by the material energy are mundane. But these impersonalists, on account of their claim that God and the living being exist in total oneness, are obliged to attribute such mundane activities to the pastimes of God. Without doing so, they would not be able to reconcile their statements like "God is in distress," or "God is begging alms."

Therefore, it is not possible to support the doctrine of impersonalism, a doctrine which completely destroys one's spiritual life, without concocting the alleged 'divine' theologies that are conveyed by statements such as "Nārāyaṇa has become impoverished to enact the pastime of begging," "Nārāyaṇa has become a pig to enact the pastime of feeding on stool," "The supreme spirit in the form of deliciously prepared chicken eggs is reposed within the belly of that same supreme spirit in the form of a holy mendicant" and the like.

It is for this reason that Śrīman Mahāprabhu clearly stated, "*māyāvādi-bhāṣya śunile haya sarva-nāśa* – hearing the commentary of a *māyāvādī* completely destroys one's spiritual life." As long as this form of artificial spiritualism, known as impersonalism, is not expelled from this world, the common man shall not be able to comprehend

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's identity, nor His name, qualities and so forth. Foolish people readily accept such malformed theologies simply because they are sold out to their sect, but they are unable to comprehend the real implication of their conception.

What else could be the fate of a common man who keeps the harmful association (*asat-saṅga*) of the impersonalists but to be misled and converted to atheism, only to engage in mere sense-gratification?

 Translated from *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā* Year 9, Issue 11, 1958

(Excerpt from Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā and Mundane Sense Gratification,

Rays of The Harmonist, Kārtika, 2009

Śrī Hari, Guru are Moved by

Śrī Vāsudeva Gauḍīya Maṭha
Postal: Vāsu-Gāṣī (Goyāla-Paḍā), Assam
21 September, 1979

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅga jayataḥ!

[In the letter published in Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's *Patrāvalī*, the recipient was kept anonymous.]

I received a letter from you many days ago. I should have replied to your warm letter much sooner. Forgive me for failing to reply in a timely manner. Your weeping is so overwhelming that it breaks everyone's heart. In your letter, you referred to yourself as my 'fallen daughter'. In the shower of your tears, even the heart of a stone-hearted person like me is torn asunder. Śrī Bhagavān shall fulfil your heart's desires. Protect your great enthusiasm and forbearance within your heart. If you envision the smiling faces of *śrī gurudeva* and the Vaiṣṇavas and remember their instructions and teachings, you will find peace of mind at all times, in all circumstances.

I came to Kṛṣṇa-nagara for the occasion of the deity installation, which was held on Akṣaya-Tṛtīya in the month of Vaiśākha (May), but at that time I had no chance to converse with you properly. It seems, therefore, that you have become dissatisfied with me. I hope that after understanding the gravity of my situation on that occasion, you have forgiven me. At that time, I presumed that perhaps you were angry with me and hurt, but upon receiving your letter my presumption was proved wrong.

Because you always weep, to console you I am always saying, "O Mother, please do not cry." Śrī Bhagavān shall certainly bestow auspiciousness upon you. Do not feel upset that you have no monetary fortune and therefore cannot donate anything for service. One serves

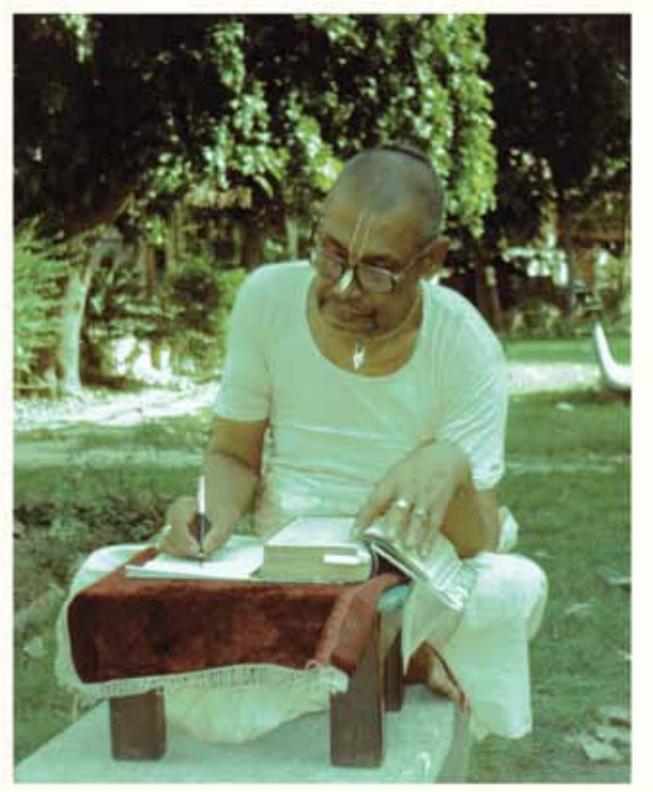
and Vaiṣṇavas Our Emotions

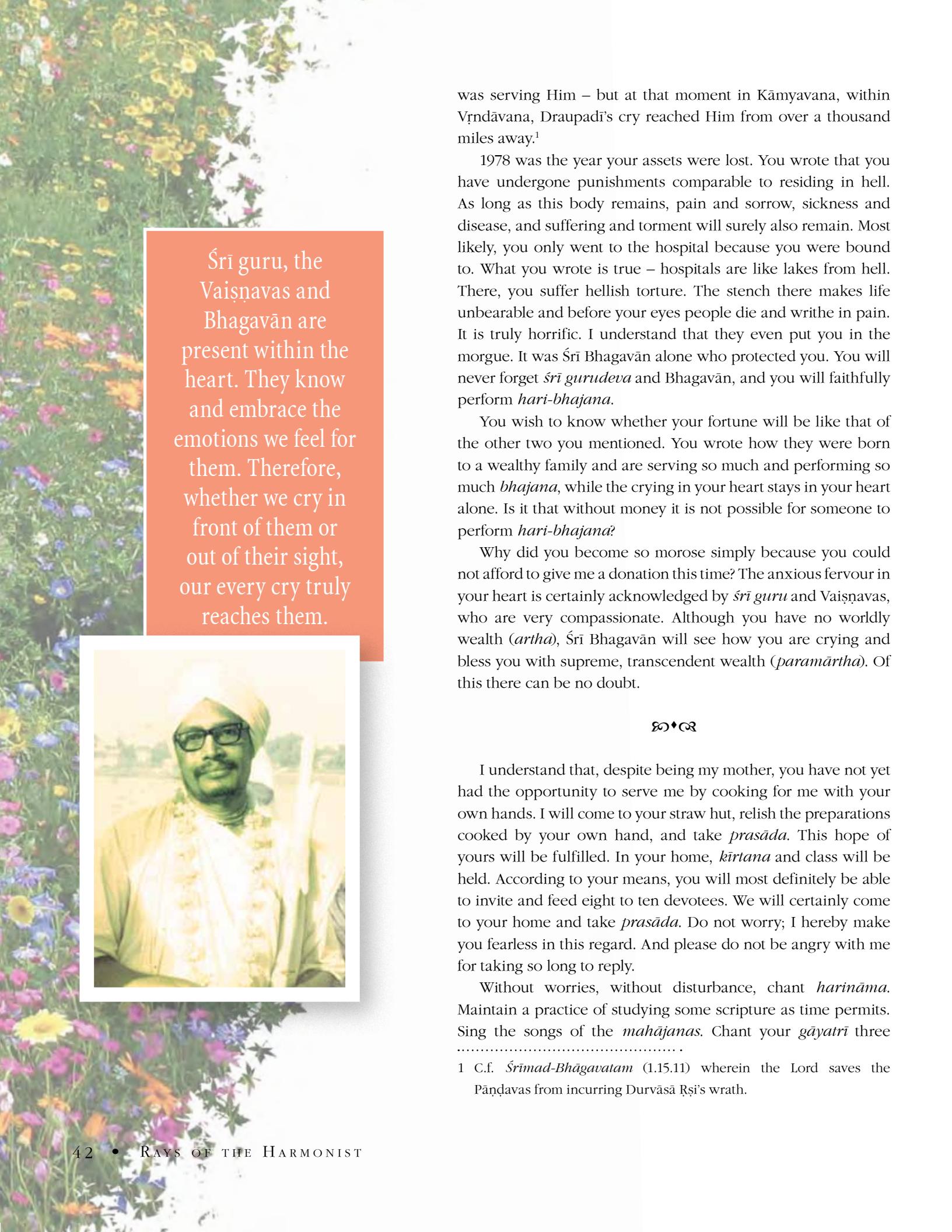
A letter from
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Śrī Hari and *guru* through one's wealth, words, mind and one's very spirit (*prāṇa*). Those who do not have wealth should serve with their words, mind and spirit. To surrender one's mind and spirit to *śrī gurudeva* and Bhagavān is the most excellent donation, for the mind and spirit are the supreme forms of wealth. If you are able to anxiously cry to *śrī gurudeva* and Bhagavān, you shall obtain the fruit of donating everything. And in that fruit your heart shall find joy and peace.

You wrote truthfully when you explained that in this world you cannot call anyone your own except for *guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān. If we make them our own, only then will our lives be successful and all of our efforts blessed. Therefore, the *mahājanas* have sung, “*tava nija-jana, parama bāndhava, saṁsāra kārāgāre* – Your personal associates are our dearest relatives and greatest friends in this jailhouse of material existence.” It is essential to realize this deep down in our hearts. Affection and loving possessiveness cannot be displayed in front of just anyone, for they are the exchange of emotions of the heart.

For this reason, even tears of devotion often become the cause of criticism and misinterpretation if they are shed in the presence of ordinary people. Those very tears give many people an opportunity to falsely judge you, to misunderstand you and so on. Therefore, in matters of *hari-bhajana*, specific instructions have been provided regarding proper times, places and circumstances. *Śrī guru*, the Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān are present within the heart. They know and embrace the emotions we feel for them. Therefore, whether we cry in front of them or out of their sight, our every cry truly reaches them. Śrī Bhagavān sat down for His meal in Dvārakā – Rukmiṇī-devī





Śrī guru, the
Vaiṣṇavas and
Bhagavān are
present within the
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was serving Him – but at that moment in Kāmyavana, within Vṛndāvana, Draupadī's cry reached Him from over a thousand miles away.¹

1978 was the year your assets were lost. You wrote that you have undergone punishments comparable to residing in hell. As long as this body remains, pain and sorrow, sickness and disease, and suffering and torment will surely also remain. Most likely, you only went to the hospital because you were bound to. What you wrote is true – hospitals are like lakes from hell. There, you suffer hellish torture. The stench there makes life unbearable and before your eyes people die and writhe in pain. It is truly horrific. I understand that they even put you in the morgue. It was Śrī Bhagavān alone who protected you. You will never forget śrī gurudeva and Bhagavān, and you will faithfully perform *hari-bhajana*.

You wish to know whether your fortune will be like that of the other two you mentioned. You wrote how they were born to a wealthy family and are serving so much and performing so much *bhajana*, while the crying in your heart stays in your heart alone. Is it that without money it is not possible for someone to perform *hari-bhajana*?

Why did you become so morose simply because you could not afford to give me a donation this time? The anxious fervour in your heart is certainly acknowledged by śrī guru and Vaiṣṇavas, who are very compassionate. Although you have no worldly wealth (*artha*), Śrī Bhagavān will see how you are crying and bless you with supreme, transcendent wealth (*paramārtha*). Of this there can be no doubt.



I understand that, despite being my mother, you have not yet had the opportunity to serve me by cooking for me with your own hands. I will come to your straw hut, relish the preparations cooked by your own hand, and take *prasāda*. This hope of yours will be fulfilled. In your home, *kīrtana* and class will be held. According to your means, you will most definitely be able to invite and feed eight to ten devotees. We will certainly come to your home and take *prasāda*. Do not worry; I hereby make you fearless in this regard. And please do not be angry with me for taking so long to reply.

Without worries, without disturbance, chant *harināma*. Maintain a practice of studying some scripture as time permits. Sing the songs of the *mahājanas*. Chant your *gāyatrī* three

.....
1 C.f. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.15.11) wherein the Lord saves the Pāñḍavas from incurring Durvāsā Ṛṣi's wrath.

times a day. We are honoured to be invited to the house of Vidura to partake of the foodstuffs prepared by the hand of Vidurāṇī.² We will be satisfied just by tasting the preparations of green leaves and rice you will prepare.

I will be coming with the party to Kṛṣṇa-nagara around the 20th of the forthcoming month of Pauṣa [December–January]. At that time, I will come to your house one day, take *prasāda* and hold class, *kirtana* and so on. For those who have no one else in this world, Śrī Bhagavān, *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas are their only aid, so why have you written that you are unfortunate? Those who immerse their minds in *hari-bhajana* by taking shelter of *sad-guru* are the fortunate ones. Their births are blessed and successful. Selfish, worldly people are forever critically analyzing devotees, but none of their judgments can harm you.

May my fallen daughters and my crazy sons continue to serve Śrī Hari in happiness and peace. The all-auspicious Lord will certainly shower beneficence upon them. In your letter, you have indicated that you remain awake, late at night and express your inner agony, babbling incoherently. Know that I would never be indifferent to such a matter. May Śrī Bhagavān grant me the intelligence to at least be able to contemplate the simplicity of your heart. Otherwise I am concerned that this son of a crazy mother and father will surely become crazy before long.

If even after obtaining *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas as your sons you still feel childless, then you should accept the provision that you should acknowledge Śrī Gopāla-kṛṣṇa alone to be your son, for such a son will never die, nor will He cause you to weep. By accepting Śrī Bhagavān to be our mother and father, our child and friend, our husband and our supreme master, we will never have to fall victim to mundane sorrow and delusion. So know Him to be your one and only son. He will never be the cause of sorrow and suffering for you.

Accept my unlimited, affectionate blessings. I am somehow or another doing fine. I conclude here –

Your ever well-wisher,

Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana



Translated from the *Patrāvalī* (compilation of letters) of
Śrī Śrimad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja

² Once, Kṛṣṇa rejected the opulent meal offered to Him by Duryodhana, who lacked devotion, in favour of the exceedingly simple offering made by the wife of Vidura (Vidurāṇī), who possessed great devotion.



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By accepting Śrī Bhagavān to be our mother and father, our child and friend, our husband and our supreme master, we will never have to fall victim to mundane sorrow and delusion. So know Him to be your one and only son. He will never be the cause of sorrow and suffering for you.



ONLY DIVINE THE HIGHEST

master, *śrī gurudeva*, by whose grace we can proceed toward that world:

*yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthā prakāśante mahātmanah*

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (6.23)

The true import of the scriptures is revealed in the hearts of those great souls who have the same unflinching *bhakti* for their *guru* as they have for the Supreme Lord.

*F*irst of all, I beg all the devotees to pardon me, for I am not expert in speaking English. Therefore, excuse my faults.

I offer my innumerable *daṇḍavats* to the lotus feet of my divine master *om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara satta śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja*, then to all the devotees by whose grace we can proceed to the transcendental world.

Figures are perceptible when they are of equal merit. *Aprākṛta vastu nahe prākṛta-gocara*. That which is transcendental cannot be attained by mundane, or material, effort, however strong that effort may be. It will be fruitless in the transcendental realm. We are observing, trying to observe, something that is purely transcendental and of the highest rank. This Vṛndāvana-dhāma is appreciated by the devotees of the supreme rank; not by someone in the lowest position. The same is true for everything relating to Vṛndāvana, everything relating to Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. So, the entrance key into that world depends upon the divine

This is the stance of the scriptures in relation to this topic. Whatever endeavour we can make, it will be fruitless if we cannot get the blessings of our divine master. So we should try to devote everything that belongs to us to the lotus feet of our *śrī gurudeva*, by whose grace our attempts can be fulfilled. According to him or our leading spiritual masters, we should try according to our ability. If we try to jump into the superior position, we may fall down and our legs may be broken. So, most importantly, we must consider one thing: we must first of all judge where we are.

We should try according to our ability. Some things may be of the highest sphere, but it is of no good to me when I am not able to understand the value of it. That *prema-bhakti* which Lord Śrī Caitanyadeva has taught, is the supreme. It is the highest thing. Even Lord Kṛṣṇa could not understand it. But He was attracted to that *prema* and was bound to undertake certain practices to attain the qualification of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. So, that qualification can neither be attained, nor understood by fallen souls, who are still bound. As long as we are bound we cannot understand it. And not only that, however free from bondage we may be, we still cannot

BLESSINGS CAN BRING US TO PLANE

by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja

understand it unless and until She and Her followers, the *sakhis*, bless us. The topic of Her *prema* is not related to the souls who are bound by material phenomena and attracted and charmed by material things. First of all we should try to rid ourselves of *mahā-māyā*'s power over us and we should try to practise those things which are necessary for that end.



Let us be freed from the joys granted by *mahā-māyā*!

In that case, this is the greatest advice from our divine masters: *nāma-saṅkīrtanam*!

The name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the name “Hare Kṛṣṇa”, has each and every power we need. It has whatever is present in Kṛṣṇa. There is no difference between the name and the person of Kṛṣṇa. They are one and the same. We cannot understand this. The more one understands it, the more one will understand the spiritual world and the world of *prema*. We chant the name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, *harināma*, but we are not feeling anything of its spirituality. How is it possible to move in the spiritual world and in the *prema* world, and in the *prema* of the *gopīs* and Rādhārāṇī? It is the best medicine for us to chant the name. It has every power to make me free and to take me to the spiritual beauties. And for this reason, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has related this in His *Śikṣāṣṭakam*:

*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam
bhava-mahā-dāvagni-nirvāpaṇam
śreyah-kairava-candrikā-vitaraṇam
vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam*

*ānandāmbudhi-vardhanam
prati-padam pūrṇāmr̥tāsvādanam
sarvātma-snapanam
paranī vijayate śrī-krṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam, Verse One

Let there be supreme victory for the chanting of the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which cleanses the mirror of the heart and completely extinguishes the blazing forest fire of material existence. Śrī krṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam diffuses the soothing moon rays of *bhāva*, which cause the white lotus of good fortune for the *jīvas* to bloom. The holy name is the life and soul of transcendental knowledge, since Vidyā (Divya Sarasvatī-devī, who awards divine knowledge) is Śrī Nāma Prabhu's consort. It continuously increases the ocean of transcendental bliss, enabling one to taste complete nectar at every step. The holy name thoroughly bathes and cools the body, mind and soul.

This medicine is the best medicine prescribed by physicians who are expert in that spiritual phenomenon. So let us proceed according to our ability. May God and our spiritual masters bless us to proceed through *nāma-saṅkīrtanam*. This much I am delivering to you first of all. Thank you very much.

*vāñcā-kalpa-tarubyaś ca kṛpā sindhubhya eva ca,
patitānāṁ pāvanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ*

A transcription of his morning class, 18 October, Kārtika 1997
Spoken in Śrī Rūpa-Sanātana Gauḍīya Maṭha, Vṛndāvana



ŚRĪ VYĀSA-PŪJĀ AND ŚRĪ GAUDĪYA VEDĀNTA

By Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

An excerpt from an article written for the appearance day of his beloved gurudeva,
oṁ viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, in 1956

In this auspicious land of India, or in fact in the whole world, within the society of those illumined by the light of *Vedānta-sūtra* – a society connected to the ancient culture, conduct, conceptions and *dharma* of India – we will find very few people who have not heard the name Kṛṣṇa-dvaitāvāyaṇa Vedavyāsa. Yet, despite having heard the name Vyāsa-deva, there are many who are completely unaware of the procedure for performing *vyāsa-pūjā*¹, of its purpose, or even what *vyāsa-pūjā* is. They seem to have never even heard of the term *vyāsa-pūjā* before.

Śrī Vyāsadeva was an *āśraya-jātiya-bhāgavat-avatāra* – that is, he belonged to the class of incarnations of Godhead who are the haven of service to God, and in that form, he was the embodiment of *kīrtana* (divine eulogy). Thus, from the lotus mouth of personified *kīrtana* emanated a constant stream of nectar, which manifested in this earthly sphere as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is also the embodiment of *kīrtana*, is an *avatāra* in the form of words (*śabda-avatāra*). That is to say, it is the written incarnation of Godhead (*grantha-bhāgavata*). *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* offers the astonishingly wonderful solution

to all problems everywhere, for all souls, throughout all time.

The *dharma* of every soul is to render service to Kṛṣṇa. This alone is called *sanātana-dharma* (the eternal occupation of the soul), *vaiṣṇava-dharma* (the religion of true theism), or *jaiva-dharma* (the inherent calling of all living beings). This very *sanātana-dharma* has been broadly and elaborately explained in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Our previous *ācāryas* saw that as time went on, the instructions of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* were variously employed in ordinary, mundane ways, in a perverted form. So, to preserve the confidential realities and conclusive truths of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in a way that is easily understandable to ordinary people, our *ācāryas* have taken shelter of the process of *vyāsa-pūjā*, throughout the ages.

First, Sūta Gosvāmī heard the divine message of Godhead (*śrauta-vāṇi*)² directly from the lips of Śrī Śukadeva, who was the first one to have heard it from Vyāsadeva. That message brings happiness to the clan of Lord Hari. So, in the arena where time stands still – the deep forests of Naimiṣāraṇya – Sūta Gosvāmī accomplished *vyāsa-pūjā* through *kīrtana* of that message (*śrauta-vāṇi*) in the presence of Śaunaka and the other ṛṣis.

1 Literal meanings of the word *vyāsa* include diameter, dividing line, a detailed account, distributor, diffuser, arranger, compiler and so on. Literal meanings of the word *pūjā* include honour, worship, respect, reverence, homage to superiors or adoration of the gods, devotion and so on. – Monier Williams Sanskrit Dictionary

2 The term *śrauta-vāṇi* specifically refers to the message of Godhead that is transmitted through the succession of authentic spiritual masters.



There, in the epicentre of *kirtana* at Śrīvāsa-aṅgana nearby the banks of *patita-pāvani* Gaṅgā, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu – who is Baladeva Prabhu Himself, the spiritual master of the entire universe, – accomplished *vyāsa-pūjā* by performing *kirtana* of the very same message of Godhead.

Later on, in Badarikāśrama, the *ācārya* of the Śrī Mādhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, Śrī Mādhvapāda, accomplished *vyāsa-pūjā* by extolling the sublime words of Vyāsadeva. Through his commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā* called *Gītā-bhāṣya*, he thus performed the uninterrupted and auspicious *ārati* of Vyāsadeva.

After that, *vyāsa-pūjā* was performed in Śrī Dhāma Māyāpura, the heart of Navadvīpa. There, in the epicentre of *kirtana* at Śrīvāsa-aṅgana nearby the banks of *patita-pāvani*³ Gaṅgā, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu – who is Baladeva Prabhu Himself, the spiritual master of the entire universe – accomplished *vyāsa-pūjā* by performing *kirtana* of the very same message of Godhead (*śrauta-vāṇī*).

Then, in recent times, from the same stage in Śrī Dhāma Māyāpura, our *parama-gurudeva*, *paramahāṁsa parivrājakācārya om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja preached the message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* throughout the entire world, demonstrating the perfect ideal of *śrī vyāsa-pūjā*.

It is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (12.3.52):

*kṛte yad dhyāyato viṣṇum
tretāyāṁ yajato makhaiḥ
dvāpare paricaryāyāṁ
kalau tad dhari-kīrtanāt*

That which could only be attained in Satya-yuga by meditating upon Viṣṇu without interruption, in Tretā-yuga by perfect ceremonial fire-sacrifices, and in Dvāpara-yuga by extravagant, ritual worship of the deity form of the Lord, is all attainable in Kali-yuga by performing *śrī hari-kīrtana*.

By adopting the process of *viṣṇu-pūjā* explained by Śrī Vyāsadeva in this verse – that is, by performing *kīrtana* of the message of Godhead (*śrauta-vāṇī*) – Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī, Śrī Mādhvapāda, Śrīman Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī have all instructed us on the process of *vyāsa-pūjā*.

Following the path of hearing the authentic message delivered by *śrī guru* (*śrauta-patha*) and rejecting any path wherein that message is not heard from an authentic source (*aśrauta-patha*) is the factual meaning of *vyāsa-pūjā*. And preparing oneself for service to Śrī Hari under the guidance of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is the purpose of *vyāsa-pūjā*.

.....
³ She who purifies the fallen souls.

The Path of Hearing

What is that *śrauta-patha* – the path of hearing the authentic message of the *guru-paramparā*?

Mahārāja Parikṣit knew very well that life is temporary, something certain to perish after a few moments, and he realized that the highest perfection of human life would certainly be to spend the last few moments of his life hearing the message of Śrī Hari flow from the lips of a *mahā-bhagavata* (a devotee of the highest class). So, after renouncing his entire kingdom, he arrived on the bank of the supremely purifying Śrī Gaṅgājī. Present there were many, many divine seers (*r̥ṣis*), thoughtful sages (*munis*), preceptors of *dharma*, spiritually enlightened men (*brahmaṇas*), deeply learned scholars, brilliant sophists, adherents to the path of proper action, mystic *yogīs*, powerful ascetics, and those who were observing severe vows.

But who actually resolved all the deep concerns of that sincere inquirer? Who bestowed upon him divine vision of true reality? None but Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī – the best of the *mahā-bhagavatas* and the disciple of personified *kirtana*, Śrī Vyāsadeva. Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī had heard from Śrī Vyāsadeva through *śrauta-paramparā* – the descent of the message of Godhead from the authentic and realized speaker to the qualified hearer. He had thus heard discourses on *bhagavad-bhakti* and he had also heard the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, within which is the sublime message of the transcendental kingdom that exists far above the realm of mundane sense perception.

Later, Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī appeared in that very same current of the message of Godhead (*śrauta-paramparā*). In Naimiṣāraṇya, amidst the *r̥ṣis* and *munis*, who were all frightened by the onset of the age of Kali, he was able to effectively and concisely deliver the purport of the Vedas in direct and simple language.

Even within this age of Kali, Śrī Gaurasundara manifested His eternal pastimes and, in the shelter of the perpetual flow of that same message of Godhead – that is, in the shelter of *kirtana* – He has delivered all the living beings ensnared by Kali. And recently, in pursuit of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's innermost desire, *om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda has actualized the welfare of the entire world through that same message of Godhead (*śrauta-vāṇi*) – through *hari-saṅkirtana*. And today,

by performing *kirtana* of the message of Godhead in accordance with the guidelines he set, his dedicated followers celebrate *vyāsa-pūjā* every year.

First be established in the self

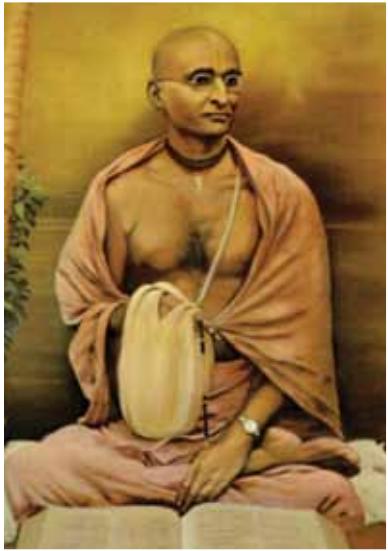
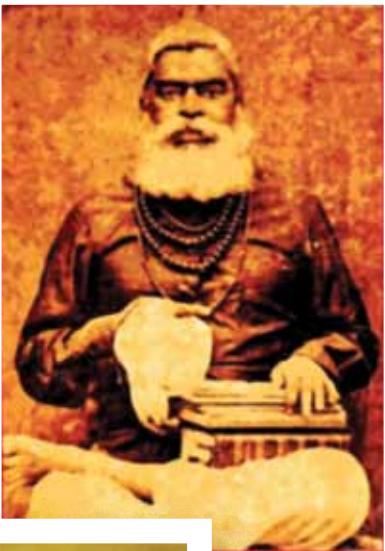
Performance of *vyāsa-pūjā* is not meant to be carried out by just one particular individual or by one particular sect (*sampradāya*); rather it is meant for all souls. In Mahābhārata, Śrī Vyāsadeva has said “*sarve varṇa brāhmaṇā brahmajāś ca*.” In other words, all castes are *brāhmaṇa* because they are born of Brahmā. Therefore, everyone has the right to perform *vyāsa-pūjā*. However, qualification to do so is also essential. For example, all men or women have the right to become a father or mother, but, due to lacking the qualification of sufficient age, a five year old boy or girl can not attain the condition of parenthood. Similarly, without acquiring the qualification for *vyāsa-pūjā*, one cannot perform *vyāsa-pūjā*.

Bhagavān is the totality of consciousness and the embodiment of all transcendental humours. *Guru-tattva*, the existential principle of *guru*, is also transcendental, and another name for *guru-pūjā* is *vyāsa-pūjā*. Furthermore, Vyāsadeva was an empowered incarnation of Bhagavān's potency, a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*; hence, *vyāsa-pūjā* is also a transcendental form of worship (*pūjā*). Therefore, in order to perform this *vyāsa-pūjā*, or before entering into the realm of Absolute Reality, one must first be established in the constitutional function of one's soul (*ātma-dharma*). Among all the *ācāryas* in the universe, who are like stars in the heavens, Śrī Gaurasundara is the pole-star. He has given the instruction to first of all become completely established in *ātma-dharma*. And, in *Śrī Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's first teachings to Arjuna were that he is the superior soul beyond the inert body and mind:

*apareyam itas tv anyāṁ
prakṛtiin viddhi me parām
jīva-bhūtāṁ mahā-bāho
yayedam dhāryate jagat*

Bhagavad-gītā (7.5)

O warrior, know that My material nature is inferior. I possess another, superior nature comprised of the living beings, who are occupied with this material universe.



**And recently, in pursuit of
Śrila Bhaktivinoda Thākura's
innermost desire, om viṣṇupāda
Śrī Śrimad Bhaktisiddhānta
Sarasvatī Thākura Prabhupāda
has actualized the welfare of the
entire world through that same
message of Godhead (*śrauta-vāṇi*) –
through *hari-saṅkirtana*.**

Therefore, to become established in the soul's *ātma-dharma* verily means to attain the qualification to engage in *vyāsa-pūjā*, and only this constitutes the beautiful stage upon which *vyāsa-pūjā* is performed. It is said in *śāstra*, “*nādevo devam arcayet* – an ordinary mortal can never worship a divine being.” Worship of an incorporeal entity cannot be accomplished through a corporeal entity. Worship of a conscious entity cannot be accomplished through an inert object. Cognizance is incomprehensible to incognizance. So the worshipful and the worshipper should be of the same class. Otherwise the worship will be mundane. It will not be worship at all, but rather a completely fictitious show of worship like an actor on a stage.

Apart from *bhakti*, there is no way to become pure

The technical name for becoming established in *ātma-dharma* is *bhūta-śuddhi* – purification of one's existence. The gross and subtle bodies are the soul's two provisional coverings. So, while the functioning, or *dharma*, of the body and mind is provisional and mundane, the functions of the soul are, inversely, eternal and spiritual. Those who believe that some external, formal processes can in fact be equated with purification of one's existence, or *bhūta-śuddhi*, pursue the path of fruitive actions. Just as repeatedly washing a wine pot with water can never rid it of the smell of wine, karmic endeavours – that is, actions performed through the functioning of the gross body – can never give one the qualification to worship conscious entities.

*parikṣya lokān karma-citān brāhmaṇa
nirvedam āyān nāsty akṛtaḥ kr̥tena
tad-vijñānārthanī sa gurum evābhigacchet
samit-pāṇih śrotriyan brahma-niṣṭham*

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (1.2.12)

A *brāhmaṇa* who has exhaustively and carefully studied the scriptures will realize the extreme insignificance of the branch of the Vedas that prescribes the performance of worldly *karma*. Especially he will realize that it does absolutely nothing to help a person achieve spiritual welfare. Accordingly, he will become completely disinterested in the performance of *karma*.

On the other hand, when he fully realizes that in order to gain superior, or spiritual, knowledge, which is attainable

only through the *śrauta-patha*, he must exclusively and in every respect dedicate himself to *guru*, who knows the Absolute Truth and who has seen it directly. Thus, dedicating his life to serving Bhagavān, being sincerely inquisitive and full of yearning to know the Absolute Truth, he should take a vow to spend his life following the path of *sūddha-bhakti* under the guidance of that *guru*.

As such, since the path of *karma* is dispensable, a man next endeavours for *bhūta-śuddhi* – purification of one's existence – through mental purity. He thus subscribes to the path of *jñāna*. This class of man equates *māyā* with the master of *māyā* – Śrī Hari. Such men claim, “Bhagavān is just another name for *māyā*” and outwardly they abandon *karma*, or fruitive activity. Superficial renunciation and impersonal *brahma* is the ultimate aim of their meditation. Although the topics of regulated sense enjoyment and renunciation have been described in scripture as a preparatory step in the practice of *bhakti* in order to gradually deliver us from our addiction to *karma* – an addiction that stems from ignorance – these people consider the superficial aspect of these statements to be the ultimate ideal and thus remain deprived of the eternal truth.

It has therefore been said in *Śrimad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.4):

*śreyah-sṛtīm bhaktim udasya te vibho
kliṣyanti ye kevala-bodha-labdhaye
teṣām asau kleśala eva śisyate
nānyad yathā sthūla-tuṣāvaghātinām*

This verse means that those who give up the higher path (*śreyah*) and accept difficulties just to acquire dry knowledge can be compared to a man who struggles to retrieve rice from empty husks; he obtains tribulation and tribulation alone. They thus remain deprived.

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekāṁ śaraṇām vraja
ahām tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā ūcāḥ*

Bhagavad-gītā (18.66)

Completely abandoning all bodily and mental *dharma*, such as *varṇa* and *āśrama*, fully surrender to Me alone. I shall liberate you from all reactions to your sins. Do not grieve.

*daivī hy eṣā guṇamayī
mama māyā duratyaya
mām eva ye prapadyante
māyām etāṁ taranti te*

Bhagavad-gītā (7.14)

This external energy of Mine, which consists of the three *guṇas* and which bewilders the *jīvas*, is certainly very difficult to overcome. But those who take exclusive shelter of Me can easily transcend this *māyā*.

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

Bhagavad-gītā (18.65)

Offer your mind to Me; become My *bhakta* by hearing, chanting and remembering My names, forms, qualities and pastimes; worship Me and offer obeisances to Me. In this way you will verily come to Me. I promise you this, for you are so dear to Me.

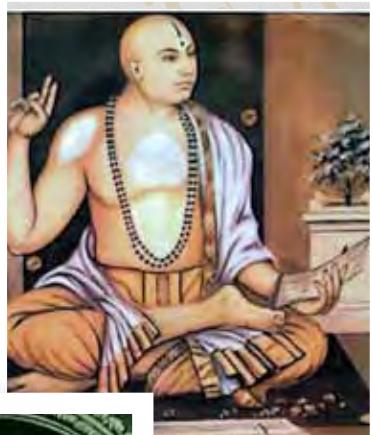
Hence in these verses from *Bhagavad-gītā*, which emanated from the lotus lips of Śrī Bhagavān, comes the unarguable affirmation that apart from service to Bhagavān, apart from *bhakti*, there is no real destination for the living entities. *Bhakti* is the topmost *dharma* of the soul. Being established in *bhakti* is *bhūta-śuddhi*, and it is the eligibility, and the ability itself, to perform *vyāsa-pūjā*.

Another way to describe *vyāsa-pūjā* is *ātmā-samarpana* (full self-surrender) at the lotus feet of *śrī guru*. To carry out the innermost desire of *śrī guru*, which is to serve Bhagavān in a beautiful way, or to act in accordance with that desire, is alone the highest *dharma*. Therefore, the farther we proceed along the path of fulfilling *śrī guru*'s innermost desire, the centre of which is Śrī Vyāsadeva and *Śrimad-Bhāgavatam*, the more we will achieve success and perfection in our performance of *vyāsa-pūjā*.

The followers of *māyāvāda*⁴ also perform *vyāsa-pūjā*. By misinterpreting certain statements of *śruti* such

.....
4 The compound word *māyā-vāda* literally means “the doctrine of illusion”. It is so called because the followers of *māyāvāda* claim that the world is an illusion.

**Śrīman
Mādhvācārya
propagated
śuddha-
dvaitavāda.**



**Śrī
Rāmānujācārya
propagated
viśiṣṭa-
advaitavāda.**



**Śrī Nimbāditya Svāmī
propagated dvaita-
advaitavāda.**



**Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī
propagated
śuddha-
advaitavāda.**

as “*aham brahmāsmi* – I am spirit” and “*tat tvam asi* – you are that”, the *māyāvādīs* accept the conception or state of impersonal oneness as their topmost goal; but in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the genuine commentary on *Vedānta*⁵, these interpretations are rejected. Moreover, Śaṅkarācārya directly clashed with the original *Vedānta-sūtra* in some parts of his own commentary. Wherever he did so, he claimed that his *gurudeva*, Śrī Vyāsadeva, had been mistaken. Hence, the readers will contemplate to what extent the *māyāvādīs*’ performance of *vyāsa-pūjā* is actual worship, or to what extent it is but a duplicitous scandal.

We have never forgotten the original author

Vyāsa-pūjā takes place in many *saṃpradāyas*. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries many great personalities appeared who preached the message of Vyāsadeva in various provinces throughout India. They rendered the message into different languages, making it easily understandable for the masses. Tulasī dāsa’s *Rāmāyaṇa* in North India, Guru Nanak’s *Ādi Grantha* in Punjab, Śrī Jagannātha dāsa’s *Oriyā Bhāgavat* in Orissa, Śaṅkaradeva’s *Kirtana Ghoṣa* in Assam, and many other devotional literatures were composed during that time. Nowadays, the members of these *saṃpradāyas* have all but forgotten the original revealed scripture, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and its original author, Śrī Vyāsadeva. These people worship their own contemporary scriptures in place of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and they worship the modern authors of those scriptures in place of Vedavyāsa. Yet, even today, such forgetfulness has not occurred in the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*.

The devotional compositions of the great contemporary authors of the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya* – compositions like *Caitanya-māngala* by Śrīla Locana dāsa Ṭhākura, *Caitanya-bhāgavata* by Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja – contain in them invaluable treasures for the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*. Despite the availability of these devotional compositions,

5 Śrī Vyāsadeva, the original author of *Vedānta-sūtra*, provided his own explanation in the form of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is therefore referred to as the natural commentary on *Vedānta*. C.f. *Tattva-sandarbha* (21.1) and *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (10.394): “*artho ‘yam brahmaśutrāṇāṁ bhāratārthaviniṛṇayayah*”, quoted from *Garuḍa Purāṇa*.

the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya* has not forgotten the original scripture, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and its original author, Vyāsadeva. Indeed, to date, the primary obligation of the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya* is to daily discuss *Vedānta-sūtra*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Śrī Bhagavad-gītā*. The behaviour and conceptions (*ācāra-vicāra*) presented in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* alone constitute the behaviour and conceptions accepted by the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*.

The Perfect Philosophy

Ācarya Śaṅkara propagated *kevala advaitavāda*; Śrīman Mādhyācārya propagated *śuddha-dvaitavāda*; Śrī Rāmānujācārya propagated *viśiṣṭa-advaitavāda*, wherein the soul and matter are understood as distinctive adjectives of *brahma*; Śrī Nimbāditya Svāmī propagated the philosophy of simultaneous difference and non-difference between the minute living entity and the Supreme Lord in *dvaitādvaitavāda*; and Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī propagated *śuddha-advaitavāda*.⁶ But none of these doctrines bear the all-encompassing conception of the Vedas. In all of them we find only a partially developed conception of *siddhānta* (perfect philosophical conclusions).

Proceeding all of them, Śrī Caitanyacandra personally appeared on the scene of great *ācāryas* and manifested His eternal pastimes. He filled any missing facets in the doctrines of these *ācāryas*, and from the unprecedented synthesis of all of them, He established the perfect doctrine. While filling in any gaps, He accepted the philosophical conclusions of Śrī Mādhyācārya regarding the Lord as the concentrated essence and embodiment of eternity, knowledge and bliss (*sac-cid-ānanda vigraha siddhānta*), the philosophical conclusions of Śrī Rāmānuja regarding the Lord's potency (*śakti-siddhānta*), Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī's philosophy of purified non-dualism (*śuddha-advaita siddhānta*) and Śrī Nimbāditya's philosophy of simultaneous dualism and non-dualism between the Lord and the living entity (*dvaita-advaita siddhānta*), and thus propagated one

6 The literal definitions of these doctrines are as follows:

Kevala advaita-vāda: exclusive non-dualism

Śuddha-dvaita-vāda: pure dualism

Viśiṣṭa-advaita-vāda: particularized or distinctive non-dualism

Dvaita-advaita-vāda: simultaneous dualism and non-dualism

Śuddha-advaita-vāda: purified non-dualism

all-encompassing, perfect conclusion called *acintya-bheda-abheda siddhānta* – inconceivable, simultaneous separateness and oneness.

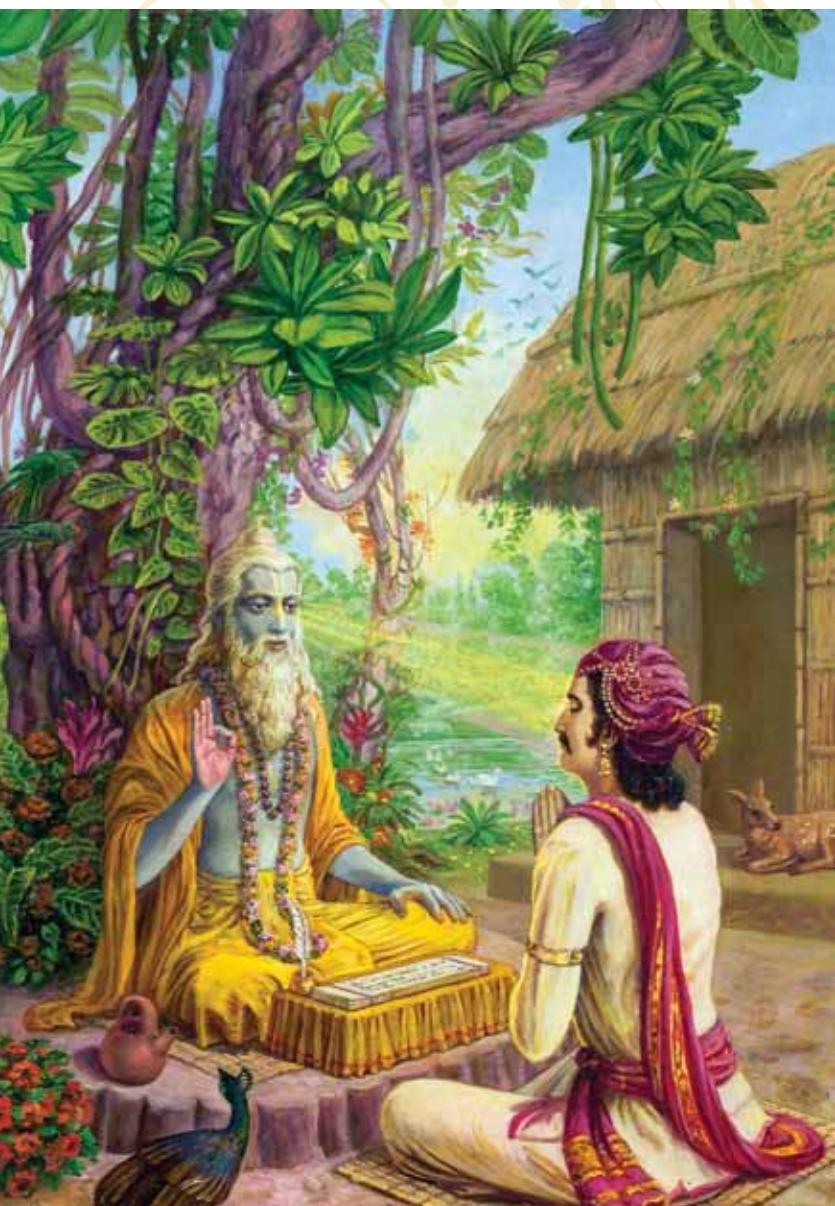
The pristine, eternal *dharma*, the very substance of the entirety of the Vedas, has been established in this *siddhānta*. Those who have accepted this perfect philosophy – *acintya-bheda-abheda siddhānta* – and follow Śrī Gaurasundara constitute the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*⁷. The performance of *vyāsa-pūjā* in a particular *saṃpradāya* will verily remain incomplete to the extent that the philosophy of that *saṃpradāya* is incomplete. So, herein lies the difference between the *vyāsa-pūjā* of the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya* and the *vyāsa-pūjā* of other *saṃpradāyas*.

To revive the sound of *kirtana* of *paramahāṁsa cakravarti* Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī's divinely penetrating treatise⁸, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which had been all but lost, and to drown the whole world in the flood of that *saṅkīrtana*, *paramahāṁsa* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja appeared in this world as *gaura-śakti* (the potency of Śrī Gaurāṅga-deva). As such, to proceed along the current of his heart's deepest wish is to truly accomplish *vyāsa-pūjā*. And this is factually in accordance with the current of the message of Godhead that has descended through the succession of bona fide *gurus* (*śrauta-dhāra*). Pursuing any other current will result in antipathy toward *guru* and Bhagavān.

Presently, even within the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*, some people have challenged this line of thought. Among them, some pretend to be on the platform of *bhajana* (transcendent, internal service) through dramatic imitation, some claim that *nāma-saṅkīrtana* of the *hare-kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* in this age of Kali is neither legitimate nor prescribed by scripture, some try to engage Lord Śrī Hari in gratifying their mundane senses, and others are drowning in their desire for wealth, women and fame. It is clear that their performance of *vyāsa-pūjā* is not real *vyāsa-pūjā* but merely a masquerade.

7 Śrī Brahma-Mādhva-Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*.

8 The original phrase is *hāniśī-saṁhitā* – a treatise by or for swan-like personalities. The metaphor of the swan is used in connection with the swan's ability to extract pure milk even after it is diluted with water. In other words, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī has extracted the purest and deepest essence from the vast ocean of the Vedas and presented it in the form of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.



© Śyāmarāṇī dāsī

**Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana
Vedavyāsa is he who
divided the Vedas and
composed the Vedānta-
sūtras.**

Factual Worship of Vyāsadeva

Some people think that discussion of *vedāntaśāstra* never takes place in the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*. Of course, they are mistaken. Certainly, these days many antithetical *saṃpradāyas* such as Āula, Baula, Karttābhajā, Neḍā, Sahajiyā, Sakhībhēkī, Smārtā and Jāti-Gosāīn have forced their way into Śrī Caitanya’s *saṃpradāya*. But their main purpose is to amass wealth, women and prestige, and their main occupation is simply to entice the common people. They are perpetually at odds with the philosophical truths (*siddhāntas*) of revealed scripture. There can be no comparison between them and the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*.

The cultivation and study of *Vedānta-darśana* takes place in the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya* more than in any other *saṃpradāya*. *Vedānta-sūtra* and its authentic commentary, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which were both authored by Vedavyāsa, are the very wealth of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. In these two scriptures the famous philosophies of ancient times – Kapila’s *sāṅkyā* philosophy, Kaṇāda’s *vaiśeṣika* philosophy, Patañjali’s *yoga* philosophy, Gautama’s *nyāya* philosophy, and Jaimini’s *pūrva-mīmāṁsā* philosophy, along with the more recent philosophies of Cārvāka, Arhat, Baudhā and Pāśupat-nakuliśa – have all been soundly refuted. At the same time, these two scriptures have established the Supreme Absolute Truth (*parabrahma*) Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the object of relationship (*sambandha*), *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* as the way (*abhidheya*) and *kṛṣṇa-prema* as ultimate goal of life (*prayojana*).

To establish the philosophical conclusive truth of *acintya-bhedābheda*, the *ācāryas* of this Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya* have composed commentaries on the three canonical Vedantic texts – *Brahma-sūtra*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and the Upaniṣads.⁹ These commentaries will always preside in the sky of the philosophical world as brilliant

9 These three texts are often collectively referred to as *prasthāna-trayī* – literally, the three points of departure (on the path of spiritual knowledge). The three points of departure refer to *Brahma-sūtra* as the course of *nyāya* (logic), *Bhagavad-gītā* as the course of *smṛti* (memorized truth) and the twelve Upaniṣads as the course of *śruti* (authentic, divine revelation).

as the sun, and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Six Sandarbhas*¹⁰ are the most extraordinary and invaluable treatises therein. They are the living and resplendent proof of Vedantic scholarship and cultivation in the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*.

And apart from these, other Gauḍīya literatures completely encompass all subjects – literatures such as Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmrta-sindhu* and *Ujjvala-nīlamani* in the realm of *bhakti-rasa-śāstra*; his *Lalita-mādhava* and *Vidagdha-mādhava* in the realm of dramas; Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Harināmāmrta-vyakāraṇa* in the realm of grammar; Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Padyāvalī*, *Hariṣadūta* and *Uddhava-saṅdeśa* and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī's *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* in the realm of poetry; Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* in the realm of *smṛti-śāstra* (codes of conduct, or law-books). These literatures even encompass the subjects of astronomical calculations, *jyotiṣa* (vedic astrology) and history.

The fundamental subject established in all these literatures is threefold: Kṛṣṇa, *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* and *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Therefore, after thorough deliberation, one can see that the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya* is the only true Vaiyāsakī *saṃpradāya*, that is, it is the only *saṃpradāya* that completely follows Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the son of Śrī Vyāsadeva, in every respect. For this reason, the present branch of the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya* was named Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti¹¹ so that, rather than accepting Śaṅkarācārya's *māyāvāda* or *nirviśeṣavāda* as the authentic conclusions of Vedānta due to ignorance, people will recognize Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas as genuine followers of Vedānta – for they exclusively follow Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the natural commentary on Vedānta. Śrī Kṛṣṇa-dvāipāyana

10 The *Six Sandarbhas*, or six treatises, comprise an exhaustive and systematic exposé of the philosophy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, through scriptural evidence. The six treatises are *Tattva-sandarbha*, *Bhāgavata-sandarbha*, *Paramātmā-sandarbha*, *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha*, *Bhakti-sandarbha* and *Pṛiti-sandarbha*. A final treatise, *Krama-sandarbha*, which is a commentary on the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, is usually included along with the other six.

11 The word *samiti* means “society, assembly, association or committee”.

Vedavyāsa is he who divided the Vedas and composed *Vedānta-sūtra*. When one states that “the Vaiṣṇavas are followers of Vedavyāsa”, it refers exclusively to the Vaiṣṇavas of this very Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*.

So, within the *saṃpradāya* that follows Vyāsadeva, worship of a *guru* who acts as *ācārya* by practising and preaching *bhāgavata-dharma* is factual worship of Vyāsadeva. To perform *vyāsa-pūjā* of such an *ācārya-guru* is to truly fulfil the innermost desire of Śrī Caitanyadeva. Accomplishing *vyāsa-pūjā* through this process is the only way to resolve the unlimited problems of this world. This form of *vyāsa-pūjā* is the perfect ideal of worshipping the message of Godhead, as it descends through the succession of authentic *gurus* (*śrauta pūjā*).

There is a great personality who has organized so many festivals to arouse *hari-bhakti* in our hearts, who has arranged spiritual assemblies, published spiritual journals and books in various languages, opened schools and training centres for spiritual studies, established *mathas* for the purpose of propagating *hari-kathā* far and wide, who has preached the immortal message of Śrī Caitanyadeva by spreading the sublime and powerful message of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and who has refuted and subdued the doctrines of anyone who subscribed to some deformed philosophical conclusion. That great personality has restored youth to the waning presence of *sanātana-dharma* in this world and has made new vitality flow through the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya* when it was on the brink of its demise. Today is the *pūjā* of that Śrī Gurudeva.

Today, the devotees of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, with a faith that is richly imbued with the moods of sublime service, are offering an arrangement of fresh, soft, delicate flowers, *kuiikuma*, incense, *candana* and various auspicious items at the beautiful lotus feet of *paramahāṁsa parivrājakācārya aṣṭottara-śāṭa* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Today, at the divine lotus feet of our *gurudeva*, we offer our obeisances millions and millions of times, and with millions of voices we eulogize his divine passion for fulfilling the deepest heart's desire (*mano-bhīṣṭa*) of his own *gurudeva*.



Translated from Śrī Bhāgavat Patrikā,
Year 1, Issue 10, 1956

Preaching

Preaching Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's message in Mauritius

by Svāmī B. V. Mādhava

The pre-eminent *acārya* of the present global society of Vaiṣṇavas, my *śikṣā gurudeva*, *om viṣṇupāda* *aṣṭottara-śata* śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, arrived in Śrī Ramaṇa Vihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha in New Delhi after the completion of Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* 2009 and briefly visiting Navadvīpa-dhāma. He waited there for one week for his visa to Mauritius.



While Śrīla Gurudeva was staying in Delhi, the High Commissioner of Mauritius in Delhi, Mr. Mookhessour Choonee, took his *darsana* twice. Mr. Choonee was so impressed by Śrīla Gurudeva's *hari-kathā* that he entreated various prominent people in Mauritius to take care of Śrīla Gurudeva during his stay there and ensure that he was comfortable.

In Mauritius, Śrīla Gurudeva was hosted at a residence one hour driving distance from the airport. Although he was far from town many respected gentlemen came to meet him. Among them were Mr. Radhamohan Nunkoo, the Drug Commissioner of the Prime Minister's office, and Mr. Somduth Dulthumun, the Chairman of the Mauritius Sanātana-dharma Temple Federation. Several other ministers informed us at that time that they were coming to meet Śrīla Gurudeva at the gathering to be held in one week.

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South Africa I

January 4–9, 2010
Vaiśnivadana dāsa

On January 4th 2010, over one hundred devotees waited at Durban International Airport for the arrival of our beloved Śrīla Gurudeva on his first visit to South Africa. Many devotees wept upon seeing him for the first time. Young Abhirāma dāsa was so excited to be the first to garland Śrīla Gurudeva.

Initially, Śrīla Gurudeva stayed in Pietermaritzburg at the home of Acyuta dāsa and Madhurikā dāsi. After his daily morning walk he would visit the homes of the enthusiastic devotees in that area. On the second and third days, he spoke at the Aryan Hall and he gave *hari-nāma* and *dikṣā* to many devotees. Śrīpad Dāmodara Mahārāja performed

Report



their *yajña* in the home of me and my wife Kṛṣṇa-priya dāsī.

Then, on the fourth and fifth days of his visit, Śrila Gurudeva stayed in Durban at the home of Atula-Kṛṣṇa dāsa and Rukminī dāsī. On those days he spoke at the Sevā Samāj Hall and warmly welcomed the two guest speakers: Dr. M. Buthelezi, a local politician and Zulu prince, And Mr. A. Rajbansi – the leader of a local political party – who were the two guest speakers.

On the sixth and final day of his first visit, January 9th 2010, Śrila Gurudeva gave a short class at the Durban International Airport as he waited for his flight to Johannesburg. At that time he also gave some local devotees personal instructions to continue his mission in South Africa. Śrila Gurudeva was very satisfied with his visit to Pietermaritzburg and Durban.



Photos from South Africa and Brazil are © Vasanti dāsī





During Śrīla Gurudeva's stay, his speech on the occasion of *Gītā Jayantī*, the day on which Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke *Bhagavad-gītā*, was most memorable. The people of Mauritius have been observing *Gītā Jayantī* for many, many years, but this year they celebrated the occasion profusely. It is a matter of great fortune that, by the will of Bhagavān, Śrīla Gurudeva was present in Mauritius at that time.

This festival was organized by the Mauritius Sanātana-dharma Temples Federation in collaboration with the Mahatma Gandhi Institute and the Rabindranath Tagore Institute at the Rabindranath Tagore Institute's auditorium. Both institutes are financed by the government of India.

There are many Vaiṣṇava institutions already present in Mauritius, but none of them have ever been given the opportunity to deliver a speech at this festival. They have only participated as members of the audience. Yet, even though this was Śrīla Gurudeva's first visit to Mauritius, the organizers of the festival entreated him to speak a few words on the occasion of *Gītā Jayantī*. Śrīla Gurudeva happily accepted their request.

Many distinguished gentlemen attended the *Śrī Gītā Jayantī* festival. Prominent among these guests were Mr. Radhamohan Nunkoo, Mr. Somduth Dulthumun, Mr. Ravin Dwarka (Chairman of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute), Mr. Anil Bachoo (Minister of Public Infrastructure, Transport and Shipping), Prof. P. K. Arya (Media Features of India), Prof. Narasimhacharry (University of Madras), Mr. Somduth Permala (Secretary the Mauritius Sanātana-dharma Temples Federation), and others.

Śrīla Gurudeva explained to the assembly that *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* was written by Śrī Vyāsadeva and that it comprises the eighteen chapters from the twenty-fifth to the forty-second chapter of the *Bhīṣma* division of *Śrī Mahābhārata*. Therein, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Bhagavān Himself, personally delivered these invaluable instructions to Arjuna, who is His dear friend and in fact, His eternal companion. Kṛṣṇa's sole purpose was to produce auspiciousness for the entire human race. Through His instructions, all of mankind has been enabled to cross the ocean of material existence and thus attain service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

Śrīla Gurudeva continued by revealing that Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa made Arjuna act as though he were bewildered by illusion, impelled him to ask questions befitting the qualification of ordinary people, and then personally delivered the answers. Those who take shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide *guru* and constantly study *Śrīmad*

(continued on page 60)

On a personal note, the 9th of January 2010 was the best day of my life. After my visit to India I wanted to hug Śrīla Gurudeva. I never told anyone about this, but as he left the airport boarding area, he walked up to me and hugged me and lovingly instructed me to help him by preaching his mission in South Africa.

Brazil

January 12–17, 2010
Govinda dāsi

About 800 devotees from all over Latin America waited for Śrīla Gurudeva's arrival in the Del Verde Hotel, in the Atlantic Forest. He had not been to Brazil for seven years and the hearts of



the devotees of Brazil were being torn asunder by separation from him. As Śrīla Gurudeva entered during a large, powerful *kīrtana*, many devotees began crying, overwhelmed with happiness.

The representative of the Consul of India, Mr. V.K.V. Raman, approached Śrīla Gurudeva and after an exchange of smiles and garlands, he spoke kind words about the distinguished presence of a *sādhu* in the world. Śrīla Gurudeva eulogized the glories of the Vedas, especially *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and the glories of Śrīla Bhaktivivedanta Svāmī Mahārāja's preaching in the Western countries.

Then, Śrīla Gurudeva explained that the *sādhu* should go here and there from door to door in order to remind the *jīvas* about their *svarūpa*, or constitutional position, and about the merciful



and worshipful Lord, Vrajendra-nandana Śyāmasundara Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa personally comes to this world; sometimes He becomes manifest in the form of the *ācāryas* like Mādhvācārya and Rāmānujācārya; and He also manifests as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the holy name. Kṛṣṇa's name is even more powerful than Kṛṣṇa Himself. Please have fixed faith in the holy name, perform *bhakti* and preach my mission throughout the world.

As the sun prepared to rise on the day of *vyāsa-pūjā*, all the devotees gathered for a sweet *marigalārati*. After that, they worked together to prepare plentiful offerings for Śrīla Gurudeva including a cake that weighed 30 kilograms. As they served together, they all softly sang "Happy birthday" and then "Govinda Dāmodara Madhaveti".

Finally, Śrīla Gurudeva instructed everyone to collect all the sweet pastimes of the *Bhāgavatam* in their hearts – Prahlada-caritra; the histories of Bhārata Mahārāja and Ajāmila; Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with the fruit seller and His pastime with Kāliya-nāga; His *rāsa-līlā*; and also *Venu-gīta*, *Gopī-gīta*, *Bhramara-gīta* and so on.

On the 16th, in the evening, Jayadeva Gosvami's *Gīta-Govinda* was performed by Odissi dancers. This festival was also an important time for facilitating better organization of the Portuguese GVP and the distribution of Śrīla Gurudeva's Spanish books from Argentina to all of the countries in South America.

Gaura premanande!

South Africa II

January 26–29, 2010
Varṇśivadana dāsa

After his trip to Brazil, Śrīla Gurudeva returned to South Africa on January 25th. He stayed at the beautiful home of Arjuna-kṛṣṇa dāsa in Johannesburg. On the second



and third days, he spoke at the Benoni Gujarati Hindu Sevā Samaj Hall to an audience of 180 people. On the third and fourth days, he spoke at the Gandhi Hall in Lenasia where 250–300 people gathered to hear his *hari-kathā*.

In the last ten minutes of his final lecture, he transported us to Vṛndāvana as he recited beautiful *ślokas* and explained them in a wonderful way. In fact, it brought many people to tears. Everyone glorified and praised Śrīla Gurudeva by clapping loudly. Then on the fifth day, Śrīla Gurudeva initiated thirty devotees.

At both venues, more than five hundred devotees and guests listened attentively as Śrīla Gurudeva spoke on many topics. He spoke very boldly about his relationship with Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja Prabhupāda and he explained that the Gauḍiya Maṭha is the father and mother of ISKCON. At both venues he and the *sannyāsīs* spoke about Śrī Kṛṣṇa's various pastimes like *dāmodara-līlā*. They also spoke about *bhakti*; about the importance of taking initiation from a bona fide *guru* and following his instructions; about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Lord Nityānanda; about, *sādhu-saṅga*; about chanting the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra*; and about understanding your *gurudeva*'s mood and Śrīla Rupa Gosvāmī's mood.

On the sixth day, January 31st, Śrīla Gurudeva flew out of South Africa. His tour was a huge success. The devotees are ardently praying for him to return soon.

The local devotees feel greatly indebted to Śrīla Gurudeva, Śrīpad Mādhava Mahārāja, Brajanātha Prabhu, Vṛnda dīdī, Śrīpad Āśrama Mahārāja, Śrīpad Sajjana Mahārāja, Śrīpad Dāmodara Maharaja and all of Śrīla Gurudeva's preaching team. 🌸



Bhagavad-gītā in the association of *sādhus* will quickly cross over the ocean of worldly existence and attain service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Of this there is no doubt.



The speaker of *Śrī Gītā* is Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. Many *yuga-avatāras* and *līlā-avatāras* appeared in the land of India, but none of them personally proclaimed their position as Bhagavān. Even *maryādā puruṣottama* Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra and *prema puruṣottama* Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu tried to conceal that they were Bhagavān.

Bhagavān Śrī Rāma's pastimes were certainly filled with heart-rending and tender moods. By reading and reciting His *līlās*, by hearing them, and by seeing them performed on stage, an uncontrolled river of tears often flows from the eyes of the listener, and the hairs of his body stand on end. Sometimes his eyes remain wide open as he wonders what will happen next; Śrī Rāma's *līlās* are so heart touching. Since they actually appear to be the pastimes of an ordinary mortal, they have become exceedingly popular throughout the entire world. But Bhagavān Śrī Rāma never presented Himself as Bhagavān.

On the other hand, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has established His own Godliness (*bhagavattā*) within *Śrī Gītā* and He has also established *bhakti* to Him as the supreme *sādhana* (process, or means) and the supreme *sādhya* (goal). Śrī Kṛṣṇa declared Himself to be Bhagavān not once, but many times. And so many famous *munis* like Devarṣi Nārada, Asita, Devala, and Vyāsa have also established this Supreme Truth.

Within *Śrī Gītā*, again and again Śrī Kṛṣṇa states that He is Bhagavān while using first-person singular pronouns such as *mad*, *aham* and *mām*:

“*mattah parataram nānyat*” (*Śrī Gītā* 7.7)

“*aham hi sarva-yajñānām*” (*Śrī Gītā* 9.24)

“*aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah*” (*Śrī Gītā* 10.8)

Furthermore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has established in *Śrī Gītā* that He alone is the supreme objective of self-surrender and of *bhakti*:

“*mām eva ye prapadyante*” (*Śrī Gītā* 7.14)

“*te ‘pi mām eva kaunteya*” (*Śrī Gītā* 9.23)

“*man-manā bhava mad bhakto*” (*Śrī Gītā* 9.34)

“*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekañ*” (*Śrī Gītā* 18.66)



On the 19th and 20th of December, at the residence of Mr. Radha-mohan Nankoo (the Drug Commissioner of Mauritius), Śrīla Gurudeva gave special *rāma-līlā kathā*.

He also elaborately explained the topic of gradations among bhaktas as gauged by their respective forms of *bhakti*. Attending this class in the house of Mr. Nankoo were journalists, ex-ministers, and other dignitaries. Prominent among them

were Mr. Bhushna Domaha, the Supreme Court judge of Mauritius, and Mr. Kiranaram Sahay, the chief editor of the Mauritius daily newspaper, *Le Matinal*.

At the end of the class, the respected judge asked Śrīla Gurudeva about his consideration regarding the cause of the developing global financial crisis. In answer, Śrīla Gurudeva explained two causes.

First, throughout the entire world, people have become excessive sense enjoyers. When life can be maintained in a simple way, what is the need of such a luxurious lifestyle? Nowadays, by simply sitting in one place and pressing some buttons, everything comes to you automatically – water, food, entertainment, everything. So, to the extent that people try to enjoy more luxury, there will be an increasing want for wealth.

Second, people have become very wasteful. They may use a particular household object, a new cloth for example, a single time or only twice. And then, impelled to purchase something new, they throw it away. They never reflect on how many resources they are wasting.

The Supreme Court judge was extremely satisfied with Śrīla Gurudeva's answer and thanked him. He and the other dignitaries requested Śrīla Gurudeva to visit Mauritius again and again.

From Mauritius, Śrīla Gurudeva travelled to South Africa, where despite strong opposition, his preaching met with astounding success.



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ॐ Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Mārga ॐ



Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī
Ṭhākura Prabhupāda
(and Śrīla Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja)

Śrī Mayāpura Gauḍīya Maṭha
Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja



Śrī Caitanya Maṭha



Śrī Gadādhara-aṅgana
Advaita-bhavana
Śrīvāsa-aṅgana



Yogapīṭha
(and Bhaktivinoda Institute)

Śrī Bhakti Santa Gauḍīya Maṭha
Śrīla Bhakti Kumudī Santa Mahārāja
Śrī Gaura-Gadādhara Āśrama
Śrīla Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Mahārāja
Śrī Sārasavata Gauḍīya Śramaṇa Āśrama
Śrīla Bhakti Kusuma Śramaṇa Mahārāja

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mission
Śrīla Bhakti Vaiśhāva Puri Mahārāja

Śrī Gauḍīya-sevā Āśrama
Śrīla Bhakti Svarūpa Parvata Mahārāja

Śrī Caitanya-Candrodaya Mandira
Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja

Śrī Gaura-Nityānanda Mandira
(Śrī Nandana Ācārya-bhavana)
Śrīla Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha
Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhhava Mahārāja

Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavat Maṭha
Śrīla Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Mahārāja

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya Maṭha
Śrīla Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Mahārāja

Śrī Cōpiñātha Gauḍīya Maṭha
Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Puri Mahārāja

Bhakti Śrī Rūpa Siddhāntī Gauḍīya Maṭha
Śrīla Bhakti Śrī Rūpa Siddhāntī Mahārāja

Samādhī Kuṭīra

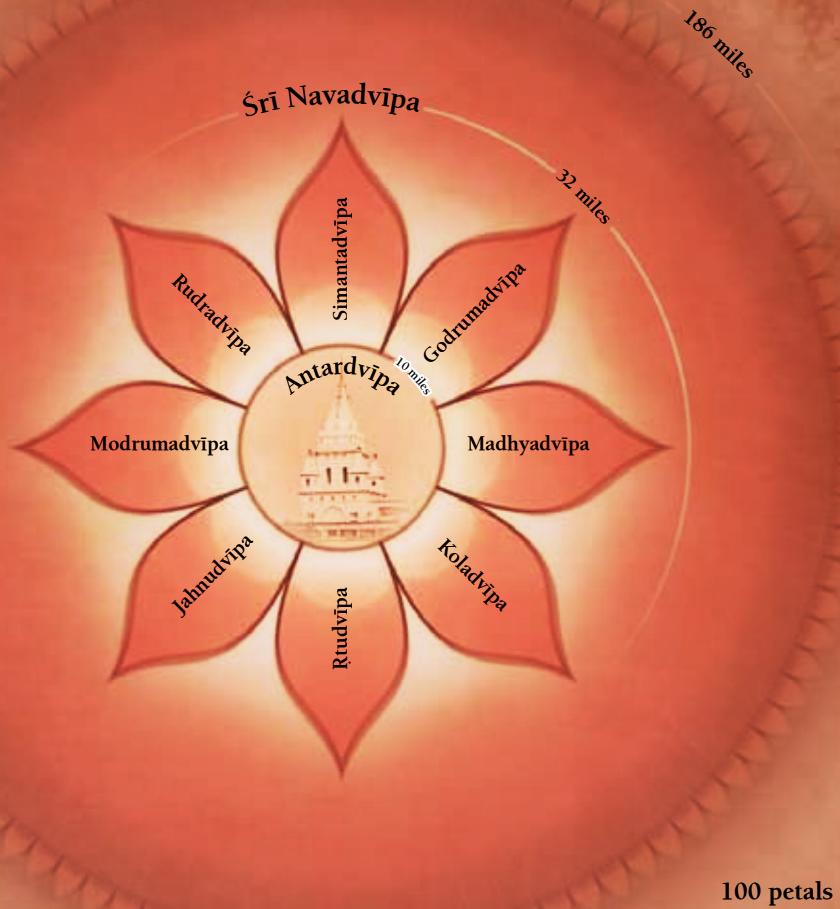
Śrīla Bhakti Sauḍhā Āśrama Mahārāja

Śrī Sarasvata Gauḍīya Maṭha
Śrīla Bhakti-sāraṇa Śānta Mahārāja

Śrī Gaurāṅga Gauḍīya Maṭha
Śrīla Bhakti Saurabha Sāra Mahārāja

Śrī Paramahāṁsa Gauḍīya Maṭha
Śrīla Bhaktiyaloka Paramahāṁsa Mahārāja

Kṣetrapāla Śiva
Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhhava Mahārāja



*prabhu-līlā-pīṭha-rūpe dhāma nitya haya
 acintya-śaktira kārya prapañcika naya
 tabe je e dhāme dekhe prapañcera sāma
 baddha-jīve tāhe haya avidyā-vibhrama*

This *dhāma* is eternal because it is the place of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's pastimes. None of the functions of the Supreme Lord's inconceivable potency (*acintya-śakti*) are material. Nevertheless, conditioned souls misled by ignorance perceive the *dhāma* from an external perspective, as merely the material world.

— *Śrī Nāvadvīpa-dhāma-māhātmya* (17.14–15)