

Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅgau Jayataḥ

The Nectar of Govinda-līlā



Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta
Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja

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Going Beyond Vaiṅkuṭha

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Bhakti-tattva-viveka

Available from:

Gauḍīya Vedānta Publications

254 Moorside Road

Downham, Bromley, Kent BR1 5EZ

ENGLAND

or

Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha

Mathurā (U.P.) 281001

INDIA

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*Spoken originally in English.

INTRODUCTION

It is a matter of great happiness that we can now present this compilation of discourses entitled *The Nectar of Govinda-līlā* before our Vaiṣṇava readers. This material was spoken originally in Hindi by one of the most prominent Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* of the modern era, *om̐ viṣṇupāda paramahaṁsa parivrājakācārya aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja*.

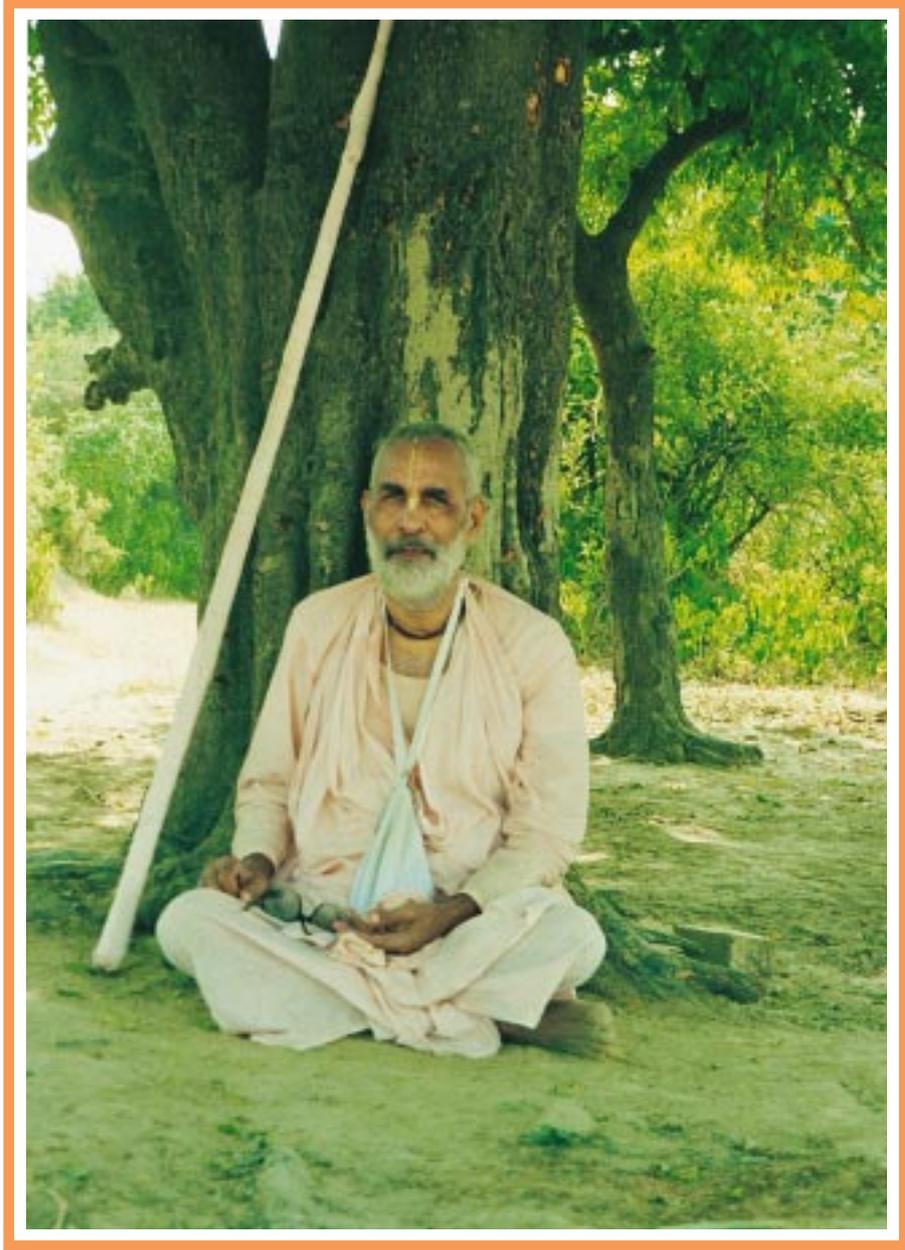
Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja appeared in the ancient village of Tewārīpura in the Indian state of Bihār on Maunī Amāvasyā in the year 1920. Located in this sacred village was the *āśrama* of Viśvāmitra Ṛṣi which Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra graced with His lotus feet. Śrīla Mahārāja's parents were Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇas* and from early childhood he showed great enthusiasm for spiritual topics. He received initiation from his *guru*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī, on Gaura-pūrṇimā in 1947 and was initiated into the *sannyāsa* order seven years later. Since then Śrīla Mahārāja has preached extensively all over India, and is especially renowned for his annual *parikramā* of Vraja-maṇḍala during the month of Kārttika. He has translated and published numerous Vaiṣṇava literatures in Hindi, but it is the quality of his *hari-kathā* which especially distinguishes him. Śrīla Mahārāja possesses a unique ability to explain Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* and a simply extraordinary ability to describe the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. For this reason it is our firm conviction that this publication will prove to be very beneficial for the sincere *sād-haka*.

Also included here is the beautiful *maṅgalācaraṇa* which Śrīla Mahārāja sings before delivering his lecture. I would like to express my gratitude to Śrīmatī Āśā Nārāyaṇa (M.A. in Sanskrit) for assisting with the translation, to Śrīmān Ālwārnātha dāsa Vānacārī for editing this material, to Śrīmatī Yaśodā-gopī-devī dāsī for proofreading it, and to Śrīmān Navīna-kṛṣṇa dāsa Brahmācārī for composing Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja's *praṇāma-mantra*. It is the earnest prayer of all of us who have prepared this publication that Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja himself, who is the very embodiment of a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava, will be pleased with our efforts.

Vaiṣṇava dāsānudāsa,

Prema-vilāsa dāsa

Completed on September 29, 1993, the anniversary of the disappearance day of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura.



श्रीकृष्ण-लीला कथने सुदक्षं
औदार्य-माधुर्य गुणैश्च युक्तम् ।
वरं वरेन्यं पुरुषं महान्तं
नारायणं त्वं शिरसा नमामि ॥

*śrī-kṛṣṇa-līlā kathane sudakṣaṁ
audārya-mādhurya guṇaiśca yuktam
varaṁ varenyaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntaṁ
nārāyaṇaṁ tvaṁ śīrasā namāmi*

I bow down and place my head at the feet of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, who is supremely expert in describing *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, who is always relishing the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa and mercifully distributing that sweetness to others, and who is the best of great personalities.

Maṅgalācaraṇa

*om̐ ajñāna-timirāndhasya
jñānāñjana-śalākayā
cakṣur unmilitam̐ yena
tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

I offer my most humble *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* unto Śrī Guru, who has opened my eyes, which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance, with the torchlight of knowledge.

*vāñchā-kalpatarubhyaś ca
kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca
patitānām̐ pāvenebhyo
vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*hā devi! kāku-bhara-gadgadayādya vācā
yāce nīpatya bhuvi daṇḍavad udbhaṭārtiḥ
asya prasādam abudhasya janasya kṛtvā
gāndharvike! tava gane gananaṁ vidhehi*

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

*aṅga-śyāmalima-chaṭābhir abhito mandikṛtendīvaraṁ
jāḍyaṁ jāguḍa-rociśāṁ vidadhataṁ pattāmbarasya śrīyā
vṛndāraṇya-nivāsinaṁ hṛdi lasad-dāmābhir āmodaraṁ
rādhā-skandha-niveśitojjvala-bhujāṁ dhyāyema dāmodaram*

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

*bhaktyā vihīnā aparādha-lakṣyaḥ
kṣiptāś ca kāmādi taraṅga madhye
kṛpā-mayi! tvam śaraṇaṁ prapannā
vṛnde! numaste caraṇāravindam*

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

*guruve gauracandrāya
rādhikāyāya tadāyayāya
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa bhaktāya
tad-bhaktāya namo namaḥ*

I offer *praṇāma* to Śrī Gurudeva, Śrī Gauracandra, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her associates, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, and to all Vaiṣṇavas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter One

man-manā bhava

Always Think of Me

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

For understanding these things, the instructions of the *Bhagavad-gītā* serve as a foundation. Constructed upon this foundation is the palace of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with its twelve floors. There are nine storeys or cantos lower, two storeys or cantos above, and in the middle is the tenth storey, or the Tenth Canto. Inside this there are ninety different *kuñjas*, which are the chapters of the Tenth Canto. And in the centre of this are five special chambers, which are the five chapters describing *rāsa*, where Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are enjoying amorous pastimes. It appears that Rādhikā is serving Kṛṣṇa, but really Kṛṣṇa is serving Her. As long as the foundation of the instructions of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is not there, we will take a mundane understanding of these topics and everything will be ruined.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*sarvopaniṣado gāvo
dogdhā gopāla nandanaḥ
pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīr-bhoktā
dugdhaṁ gītāmṛtaṁ mahat*

Bhag.-gītā-māhātmyam 5

All the scriptures—the Vedas, Purāṇas, Upaniṣads—are like a cow, and Arjuna is the calf. First the cow feeds a little milk to her calf, and she becomes pacified by that. Then the milkman Śrī Kṛṣṇa can milk the cow, and keep the remainder of the milk aside. Who is the remainder for? Those that are *sudhī*, whose intelligence is pure. Whose intelligence is pure? The big scientists and big scholars of this world? The *Bhāgavatam* doesn’t say this. It gives the word ‘*sumedhaḥ*’, and who is *sumedhaḥ*? A person who performs *bhagavad-bhajana*, who is *rasika* or expert in relishing *rasa*. One who has decided that engaging in *bhagavad-bhajana* is the essence of life is purely intelligent, and the rest are fools.

How are they fools? ‘*Go-kharaḥ*’—amongst the animals, the fool is the donkey. When we were coming from Delhi recently, we saw a dog seated on top of a donkey, just looking around. The

donkey was just going on its way in a relaxed fashion. Therefore the donkey is a big fool. People load all of their rubbish and heavy things on the donkey, and it carries them. It doesn't do any work with its front feet, but does everything with its hind legs, such as when it wants to kick someone. If you tell it to go forward it goes backward, and if you tell it to go backward it goes forward. Such a fool it is, and similarly, those that don't perform *bhajana* of Bhagavān are also fools. And who is intelligent? Only those who engage in *bhagavad-bhajana*.

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

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

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

For ordinary people, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said:

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

Bhag.-gītā 6.17

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

*jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur
dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca*

Bhag.-gītā 2.27

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

*aśocyān anvaśocas tvaiṁ
prajñā-vādāiṁś ca bhāṣase
gatāsūn agatāsūiṁś ca
nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ*

Bhag.-gītā 2.11

Those who are wise despair neither for the living or the dead. Everyone will die, and those that don't go today will go tomorrow or the next day. Don't cry or worry for them, because inside the body is the soul.

*nainaiṁ chindanti śāstrāṇi
nainaiṁ dahati pāvakaḥ
na cainaiṁ kledayanty āpo
na śoṣayati mārutaḥ*

Bhag.-gītā 2.23

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

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

Therefore He has spoken verses like this:

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

Bhag.-gītā 2.69

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

After this comes *guhyā*, secret instruction, which is *brahma-jñāna*. The *ātmā* is *brahma*, spiritual substance.

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

Bhag.-gītā 2.54

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

In the eighteenth chapter the conclusion is given:

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

Bhag.-gītā 18.54

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

*karmaṇy evādhikāras te
mā phaleṣu kadācana*

Bhag.-gītā 2.47

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

After this comes *guhyatar*, more secret, which is *paramātmā-jñāna*. There are two classes of beings, *kṣaraḥ* or fallible and *akṣaraḥ* or infallible, and then there is Puruṣottama. Bhagavān is Puruṣottama, who resides in the hearts of all living entities in the size of a thumb. Meditate on Him, and if you don't reach Him, try again. Again not reaching Him, try again.

*kleśo 'dhikataras teṣām
avyaktāsakta-cetasām*

Bhag.-gītā 12.5

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

*sa sannyāsī ca yogī ca
na niragnir na cākriyaḥ*

Bhag.-gītā 6.1

Just by performing fire sacrifices, or by muttering "*aham brahmāsmi*," one does not become a real *sannyāsī*. This is all *guhyatar*, more secret.

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

At the end of the eighteenth chapter *sarva-guhyatam*, the most secret of all secrets, is given. It is full of *rasa*, and is the highest limit of *bhakti*:

*sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ
śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ
iṣṭo 'si me dṛḍham iti
tato vakṣyāmi te hitam*

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

Bhag.-gītā 18.64-65

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

Now we will speak on the first part of this verse, “*man-manā bhava*: absorb your mind and heart in Me.” This is not a simple thing. For a man to absorb his mind in any one activity, then his eyes, ears, nose, and all his senses must be completely centred on that. If the mind cannot concentrate on something, it is more or less uncontrolled. Sometimes our mind is pondering sense enjoyment, and sometimes we think about Kṛṣṇa. This is the conditioned state. But if someone’s mind is fully absorbed in the lotus feet of Bhagavān, then that is the highest form of worship. When will this be possible? In the beginning stage of *śraddhā* or faith it is not possible. Then the stage of *ruci* or taste will come, and still it won’t be possible. After this we can really begin to give our heart. In the stage of *āsakti* or spiritual attachment we can give perhaps one-half of our heart to Him. In the stage of *bhāva* or devotional ecstasy maybe we can give three-quarters of our heart to Him, but only in the stage of *prema* or divine love can we fully give our hearts to Kṛṣṇa.

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

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

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

He said, “Yes, there is one thing. There in Vṛndāvana are the *gopīs*, who are the most dear to Me. They have given Me their entire hearts, and besides Me they know nothing. For Me they have forgotten all of their bodily needs and bodily functions. What is the condition of someone who has forgotten all bodily needs? They have forgotten eating and drinking, bathing and decorating themselves with ornaments and clothing, and fixing their hair. Their bodies will certainly have become thin and weak, and just see how for Me they have forgotten all of their bodily relations: husbands, sons, friends, brothers, wealth and property. They have no love for anyone but Me, and day and night they are deeply remembering Me. Uddhava, in this world you have not seen such an example of how one person can give their heart to another. Somehow or other they are holding onto their lives. Their life-airs have risen up to their necks, and how much longer can they live like this? I don’t know if they can be saved or not. Therefore go quickly, and save their lives. Go and give them My message, that I am definitely coming tomorrow or the next day. For this they are holding onto their lives. They will think, ‘Kṛṣṇa has said that He is coming, and He is not able to tell a lie.’ Clutching onto this hope, it is as if their lives are hanging on a limb. If the limb breaks, they will fall down, meaning they will give up their lives. So go quickly.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

but you cannot. There is a black snake out there, and if it bites you, you will never be able to remove its poison. Therefore stay in the house! We will be back soon.”

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

“No! It’s dangerous! Don’t go! Your heart is very immature, and you will never remove the snake’s poison. You just sit there.”

“Still I will go with you!”

“No! It’s dangerous! You won’t go!”

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

“No! You won’t go!”

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

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

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

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

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

Shaking the girl, somehow she managed to bring her inside the house. “Here! Take this churning stick and churn some yoghurt. By doing some hard work your mind will return to you.” But the girl took the wrong pot, and instead began churning mustard seeds, and it made a terrible noise. Sometimes she would churn, and sometimes she would stop. Where was her mind and heart? Kṛṣṇa had taken them: *man-manā bhava*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Next He will explain ‘*mad-bhakto*’—“Become My devotee.”

Chapter Two

mad-bhakto

Become My Devotee

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

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

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

At first, with hands folded together, Arjuna said:

śiṣyas te 'ham śādhi mām tvām prapannam

Bhag.-gītā 2.7

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

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

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

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

To become a devotee, one thing is especially necessary:

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

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.11

One shouldn’t have any type of material desire. For attaining *bhakti*, for attaining the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa or a real devotee, there cannot be a scent of any other desire in the heart. What to speak of the desire itself, there cannot be even a scent of it. Listen to this attentively, and become like this, and then you will understand *bhakti*; otherwise it will be very difficult. There are to be no tendencies of *jñāna* or *karma*.

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

But see how these things can cover *bhakti*. In the name of helping others, Bharata Mahārāja made a mistake and fell down. He had been practicing *bhakti* and attained a very high stage of *bhakti*, up to *bhāva*. He saved the baby deer from the mouth of the tiger and from drowning in the stream, and afterwards he maintained it by feeding it milk, thinking he was benefiting another living entity. But because of this activity he had to take another three births.

Therefore although *jñāna* and *karma* will remain, they must be kept in a position of servitude to *bhakti*. Otherwise our *bhakti* will become covered. So how will we engage our *jñāna* and *karma*? By going to the market and bringing good quality fruits and vegetables for the service of

the Deities. The Deities will accept the offerings and give *prasāda* to everyone. By this, *bhakti* will not be covered; instead it will increase.

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

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

yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra

Bhag.-gītā 3.9

Your action should be a sacrifice for Bhagavān. This is the instruction of the *Gītā*—whatever you eat or drink should be for sacrifice.

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi
yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya
tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam*

Bhag.-gītā 9.27

Whatever you eat, if you prepare food, if you perform a sacrifice, if you are keeping a garden—all should be for offering to the Deity. In general the spiritually inclined people of this world are going on like this. But Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Gauḍīya *ācāryas* have taught, "Don't do things in this way! Beware! You'll be trapped!" Rather we should first offer our very selves to the Deity: "I am Yours." Then whatever we eat or do will automatically be for Bhagavān.

*śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ
smaraṇaṁ pāda-sevanam
arcanaṁ vandanaṁ dāsyam
sakhyam ātma-nivedanam*

*iti puṁsārpitā viṣṇau
bhaktiś cen nava-lakṣaṇā
kriyeta bhagavaty addhā
tan manye 'dhītam uttamam*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 7.5.23,24

“Hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa, remembering Him, serving His feet, worshipping Him, praying to Him, becoming His servant, becoming His dear friend, and fully surrendering to Him: this is nine-fold *bhakti*. Performing these nine types of *bhakti* is the topmost knowledge.”

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

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

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

Bilvamaṅgala asked, “Who is this girl?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Just as in the case of Bilvamaṅgala—he was a *sādhaka*, and in the end what happened? Kṛṣṇa Himself came and led him by the hand to Vṛndāvana. He was engaged in such *sādhana* that day and night he was in deep meditation, but not just passively. He was doing *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam*, and *pāda-sevanam* all in the mood of a *sakhī*. From the beginning he did it with the sentiments of a *sakhī*. We should also execute that kind of *sādhana* wherein there is not even a trace of *karma* or *jñāna*. Then gradually one’s own internal *svarūpa* will bloom, and in that form we can offer direct service to Kṛṣṇa. A *rāgānugā* devotee should practice *sādhana* like this.

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

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

Śrī Ṣaḍ-gosvāmy-aṣṭakam 6

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

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

After some time Raghunātha dāsa was married to a girl of heavenly beauty. He was like a prince, and his physique was very soft and beautiful. At a very tender age, only sixteen, he went mad in separation from Kṛṣṇa. Many times he tried to leave home, but his family would always catch him and bring him back. He received the mercy of Nityānanda Prabhu by offering some service to Him, and was then able to escape from his home. He ran at night by the path through the forests so that he would not be detected. For seven days he didn’t eat or drink anything until he arrived at the house of a milkman who fed him some milk and puffed rice. At such a tender age, walking day and night he finally arrived in Jagannātha Purī.

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

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

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

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

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

He replied, “Mahāprabhu and Svarūpa Dāmodara have left this world, so I also cannot stay. I will give up my body by jumping from Govardhana, otherwise I will drown myself at midnight in Rādhā-kuṇḍa, thereby attaining the feet of Rādhikā. For this reason I have come.” Just see what a thing divine separation is.

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

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

*he rādhe vraja-devike ca lalite he nanda-sūno kutaḥ
śrī-govardhana-kalpa-pādapa-tale kālindī-vane kutaḥ*

Śrī Ṣaḍ-gosvāmy-aṣṭakam 8

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

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

By practicing *karma-yoga*, in the snap of a finger it is possible to go to the heavenly planets. After performing austerities, Dhruva even attained Vaikuṅṭha in that very body. But the *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* that we are describing here is very rare and difficult to attain.

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

Śravaṇam, *kīrtanam*, *viṣṇu smaraṇam*—here, for us what is the meaning of *viṣṇu-smaraṇam*? Remembrance of Rādhe, and remembering the amorous pastimes of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī wrote, "The descriptions of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are my only ornament. I have no desire to hear anything besides this, and I have no desire to go even to Vaikuṅṭha. Taking just a piece of *roṭī* for my maintenance, I will never leave Vṛndāvana or Rādhākuṅḍa. My body may leave here, but my very life will never leave here." This was his *niṣṭhā*.

Great eagerness to attain the service of Bhagavān is necessary for *sādhana*. These devotees are real *sādhakas*, but what are we? We are just on the first step of *bhakti*, which is *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*, and that also is of two kinds: *niṣṭhatā-bhakti* and *aniṣṭhatā-bhakti*. Our *sādhana* is included within *aniṣṭhatā-bhakti*, because our intelligence has not yet become immovable. Someone may be thinking, "I will do *bhajana* here at home with my parents because they are getting old anyway. Or, having heard that the household is likened to a lake of hell, I will leave it and join an *āśrama*. But then again, Arjuna, Śrīvāsa Ācārya, and the *gopīs* were great devotees and they were *gṛhasthas*, therefore I should remain a *gṛhastha*. But Nārada, Śukadeva, the Gosvāmīs, and Caitanya Mahāprabhu all referred to family life as a dark well and left it. They were unable to do *bhajana* there. What will I do? Alright, I will remain for some time and then leave it. No, on second thought I will go immediately." In this way we go on undoing what we have already done and being undecided. We have no *niṣṭhā* (firm resolution). We are practicing *bhakti*, but it is *aniṣṭhatā*, so we should endeavour to make our intelligence immovable and come to the stage of *niṣṭhā*.

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

*muktiḥ svayaṁ mukuli tāñjalīḥ sevate 'smān
dharmartha-kāma-gatayaḥ samaya-pratīksāḥ*

Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta 107

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

Having attained *niṣṭhā*, then we may be able to absorb our minds in Kṛṣṇa somewhat, but still some *anarthas* will remain. The reactions to our previous *karma* will still come, of either sinful or pious actions. Or we may be practicing *karma-miśra-bhakti*: covered *bhakti*, *bhakti* with self-ish desires; then the fruit of that will come also. What big, big people of this world try so hard to attain but don’t get—these things will automatically become present before us. Abundant prestige will come to us, and we can easily become drowned in the enjoyment of that. Therefore be especially aware of this. There are four kinds of *anartha*: *duṣkṛtothā* or those arising from previous sins, *sukṛtothā* or those arising from previous piety, *bhaktyutthā* or those arising from imperfect service and *aparādhotothā* or those arising from offences in chanting. Or if we even unknowingly commit an offence to the feet of a Vaiṣṇava, then its reaction must come.

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

*gurau goṣṭhe goṣṭhālayiṣu sujane bhūsuragaṇe
sva-mantre śrī-nāmnī vraja-nava-yuva-dvandva-śaraṇe
sadā dambhaṁ hitvā kuru ratim apūrvam atitarāṁ
aye svāntarbhṛtāś-catura abhiyāce dhṛta-padaḥ*

Śrī Manaḥ-sīkṣā 1

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

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

This story illustrates how Kṛṣṇa cares for those who have really become His devotees: There was a *brāhmaṇa* devotee of Kṛṣṇa who had read many scriptures and many commentaries on the *Gītā* and *Bhāgavatam*. He read the *Gītā* every day, and while reading, many spiritual sentiments would arise within him. He wrote down his realisations and desired to publish them so that ordinary people would be able to easily understand them. In this way he was engaged in *bhajana*. From the beginning he never took any employment. He would only beg for one hour each day, and

the rest of the time he would study the scriptures, take *harināma*, and perform *śravaṇam-kīrtanam*.

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

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

*ananyāś cintayanto mām
ye janāḥ paryupāsate
teṣām nityābhīyuktānām
yoga-kṣemam vahāmy aham*

Bhag.-gītā 9.22

He began to analyse this verse: “*Ananyāś cintayanto mām*: those whose minds are fully self-controlled, who have no other object of meditation besides Kṛṣṇa. *Ye janāḥ paryupāsate*: one who worships Kṛṣṇa in all ways, especially by the medium of *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*, becomes situated very near to Him. *Teṣām nityābhīyuktānām*: for those who are fixed in performing *bhajana* like this, then its result also is for the happiness of Kṛṣṇa, not for themselves. Even if a person of bad conduct engages in this type of exclusive *bhajana*, then Kṛṣṇa will accept him. And if that exclusive sentiment is not there, then Kṛṣṇa will never reveal Himself. This verse is related to *sādhana*, and not the stage of perfection. To those who have exclusively taken shelter of Kṛṣṇa, He is their protector and maintainer. Besides Him there is no other.”

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

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

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

Then he went for begging, thinking, “Kṛṣṇa will carry what we require on His own body? Perhaps He would inspire a king or some wealthy man to come and help us, but He wouldn’t carry anything on His own head. The all-knowing and all-powerful Prabhu? I have heard that he made the poor *brāhmaṇa* Sudāmā into a king, but He didn’t physically carry any burden for him. I have never heard this.”

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

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

The *brāhmaṇa*’s wife replied, “What? My husband has no disciples.”

The boy replied, “Yes, yes, it is possible.”

She said, “Then who?”

“I who am speaking, I am a disciple of your husband.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

The *brāhmaṇa* replied, "What? What are you talking about?"

"You know very well—that boy you sent here loaded up with everything you collected."

"Who? I don't know anything of all this!"

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

"Where is He then?"

"Come inside and see!"

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

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

Next He will explain '*mad-yāji*'—"Worship Me."

Chapter Three

mad-yājī mām namaskuru

Worship Me and Offer Praṇāma to Me

*sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ
śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ
iṣṭo 'si me dṛḍham iti
tato vakṣyāmi te hitam*

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

Bhag.-gītā 18.64,65

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

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

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

Bhag.-gītā 4.34

One who approaches the *guru* with these three tendencies: *praṇipātena* or submission, *paripraśnena* or relevant inquiry, and *sevayā* or sincere service is qualified to understand this knowledge. If someone approaches the *guru* and demands answers to his questions, or if he doesn't attentively listen to the answers and has to ask the same questions again, then the *guru*

will only give him superficial instructions. He will not give *sarva-guhyatam*, the most hidden knowledge. Concerning this, Kṛṣṇa has taken a vow that to anyone whose heart has not been purified by austerities, who is not surrendered, and who has not served *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, the essential knowledge of the *Gītā* will not be given.

First Kṛṣṇa only told Arjuna to perform sacrifice:

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

Bhag.-gītā 3.9

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

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

*yoginām api sarveṣāṃ
mad-gatenāntar-ātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo māṃ
sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*

Bhag.-gītā 6.47

“Yoga is better than *karma*, *jñāna*, or *tapasyā*. And of all types of *yogīs*, the one who has surrendered to Paramātmā, who is fully united with Him in *yoga*, and who is exclusively worshipping Him with faith, is the best.”

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

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

In the stage of *bhāva*, *man-manā bhava* may be a little possible, but only in the stage of *prema* can we really always be thinking of Kṛṣṇa. It is very rare that someone will reach the stage of *bhāva* in *sādhana*. In the process of becoming a devotee (*mad-bhakto*), first there is *srāddhā*,

then *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, *āśakti*, and finally *bhāva*. From this point it can be said that one has really become a devotee, and can really begin to think of Kṛṣṇa.

Next Kṛṣṇa says, “*Mad-yājī*.” ‘*Yājī*’ means *yajña*, sacrifice. If one has not yet developed any real love for Bhagavān, but has just a little faith, then he can perform *yajña*. This sacrifice is a treatment for material entanglement. A verse concerning this is found in the conversation between Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Rāya Rāmānanda (*Cait.-carit. Madhya-līlā* 8.69). The Deity may be worshipped with sixteen kinds of paraphernalia, or with twelve kinds, or with five kinds, but if there is no *prema* in the *pūjā*, Bhagavān will never be satisfied. When hunger and thirst are present, then food and water are tasteful. Food will only be tasteful to the degree that there is hunger. If we are not hungry, and someone serves us some nicely prepared vegetables, we will say indifferently, “Oh, what have you made?” Then tasting it, we will say, “There is not enough salt in it.” Or we will say that there is too much salt in it. We will consider the sweet rice to be too thin, the *chapātī* to be out of shape, and the *rasagullā* to be flat, not round as it should be. But if we are hungry, we may take a stale *chapātī*, add some water and perhaps squeeze a lemon on it, and consider that it is very tasteful. If we are hungry, then food will be tasteful.

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

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

Bhag.-gītā 9.26

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

There is one point here that we must understand. We should not be thinking, “Why is this offering for the pleasure of Bhagavān? Ultimately it is for our own happiness.” In the *Bhāgavatam* it says:

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

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 1.2.6

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

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

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the story of Pṛthu Mahārāja shows us what is proper *arcana*. King Vena was an atheist who had no faith in Bhagavān and had actually insulted Him, so the sages decided that he was no longer qualified to occupy the throne. Simply by using sound vibration they killed him, but actually it was the reactions to his own sins which killed him. Now without a king, the subjects were all very frightened. Dacoits were causing disturbances and perpetrating cruel and mischievous acts, so the people prayed to the sages for protection. The sages decided to churn the thighs of the dead body of Vena, and from them a sinful personality named Niṣāda was produced. Next they churned the arms of Vena's body, and from them Pṛthu Mahārāja appeared. What is the meaning of 'pṛthu'? One whose fame will be spread in all directions because of his good qualities, and who can protect and nurture his subjects, is called *pṛthu*. He didn't appear alone; a woman appeared with him. Her name was Arci, and just as Pṛthu Mahārāja was a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*, she was an incarnation of Lakṣmī-devī. The activity that she performs is called '*arcana*'. What does Lakṣmī do? She serves her master, Nārāyaṇa, and if anyone serves Bhagavān in this way, it is called *arcana*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On Brahmā’s insistence they released Indra, and again started the sacrifice. Then Viṣṇu appeared in the sacrificial arena, with club, lotus, disc, and conchshell in His four hands and

Indra at His side. He said, “Your sacrifice is now complete. Forgive Indra. He is My partial expansion, and through him I protect and nurture the world, so you should not remain angry with him for stealing the sacrificial horses. There are those who have performed sacrifices with a desire for their own enjoyment, such as kings who wanted to expand their empires. Their *arcana* was based on a bodily conception of life, but Pṛthu Mahārāja has performed these sacrifices exclusively for the satisfaction of Hari, knowing full well the difference between the body and the soul. Your sacrifices are now successful.”

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

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

Then came one *amāvasyā* (new moon) night in the month of Māgha, and it was extremely dark. A very strong wind was blowing and it was raining very hard for the entire night. The water of the Yamunā had risen and was flowing very fiercely near Viśrama Ghāṭa where he would usually bathe and collect his water. He was shivering from the cold. It was approximately three o’clock in the morning, but he wasn’t sure of the time. In those days there were no wristwatches. People would simply look to see the positions of the Dhruva and Śukra stars and in this way estimate the time. But on this night the stars could not be seen due to the dense clouds. After bathing in the Yamunā, it was so dark and raining so hard that he became lost and could not make out the way to his home. He was in great anxiety about protecting his vow, thinking, “How will I make it home? What will I do?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Later while his mother was preparing *chapātīs* and *sabji*, the boy bathed the Deity with Ganges water and *tulasī* leaves and after dressing Him, he placed the Deity back on His *siṅhāsana*. Next he placed the *chapātīs* and *sabji* before the Deity, and carefully placing a *tulasī* leaf on each preparation, said, "Ṭhākuraḥ, please take Your meal now. I don't know all of the appropriate *mantras*, but You please eat. I will remain standing just here."

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

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

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

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

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

“He ate them.”

“He ate them? How is it possible?”

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

“Why?” the *brāhmaṇa* asked.

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

“Ṭhākuraḥ has eaten? How?”

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

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

“Alright, alright. Tonight you again make the offering.”

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

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

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

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

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

This is the necessary sentiment for performing *pūjā*. If there is no such sentiment, no such faith, then there is no qualification for *pūjā*. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says:

*patraṃ puṣpaiṃ phalaṃ toyaiṃ
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṃ bhakty-upahṛtam
aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ*

Bhag.-gītā 9.26

“I accept whatever is offered to Me by those who have this exalted sentiment of pure devotion.”
Arjuna said, “Prabhu, it is not possible for me to do this type of *arcana* here on this battlefield. Please tell me an even easier way.”

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

Not just any *praṇāma*, but the meaning of ‘*namaskāra*’ is offering it without any false ego.

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*

Bhag.-gītā 18.66

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

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

*dasaśvamedhi punareti janma
kṛṣṇa praṇāmī na punarbhavāya*

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

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

So Arjuna said, “Prabhu, I offer *praṇāma* to You not just once, but hundreds of times!”

In this verse, Kṛṣṇa says, “*Mad-bhaktō*: become My devotee. *Man-manā bhava*: absorbing your mind and heart in Me, engage in My *bhajana*. At the end of that *bhajana*, *mad-yāji*: worship Me, and after performing *pūjā* offer your full *praṇāma* to Me.”

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

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

Chapter Four

Basanta Pañcamī

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

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

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

Kṛṣṇa has different *rāsas* at different times. Amongst them, *śaradīya-rāsa* and *basantī-rāsa* have their own special importance. For giving *ānanda* to all of the *nitya-siddha gopīs* and *sādhana-siddha gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa commences the *śaradīya-rāsa*. No activity or pastime of Kṛṣṇa is done for His own pleasure, whereas any activity that we do, even up to serving the Deity, is done for our own pleasure. We are serving the *guru* for what? To get some future pleasure from it, so we will attain something. We may be performing *bhajana*, but in doing that, the idea of giving pleasure to

Kṛṣṇa is secondary. It should be the prime consideration, but in our conditioned state we are serving merely for our own peace of mind. That which we do for ourselves is not *bhakti*. Gradually, when what we do becomes solely for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa and His associates, then only will it be *bhakti*. It must be purely for Kṛṣṇa, for Rādhā, for Their associates, and then it will be *śuddha-bhakti*.

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

*bhagavān api tā rātrīḥ
śāradotphulla-mallikāḥ
vikṣya rantuṃ manaś cakre
yoga-māyām upāśritaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.29.1

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

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

The description of *śaradīya-rāsa* has been given in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and it is very beautiful and pleasing to the heart. *Basantī-rāsa* has been described in the *Gīta-govinda* by Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī. One other topic of *rāsa*, *āścarya-rāsa*, has been described by Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī in a small book of Sanskrit poetry named *Āścarya-rasa-prabandha*.

What is the meaning of *rāsa*? *Maṇḍalī-vādhya-nṛtya*: when in an independent way, one hero and many different heroines come together and dance to instruments playing scriptural music, it is called *rāsa*. This particular type of dancing has been described in the scriptures, and we do not see this *rāsa* in any other incarnation of Bhagavān besides Kṛṣṇa. They are able to do it, but have not, so then what to speak of any human being. If any human does this, it is given the name ‘lust’ and is considered degraded behaviour. When those devotees who for millions of births have rejected worldly desires and pleasures and have performed *bhajana* with the sentiment of the *gopīs* for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa meet together in a group in an independent, free way, dancing to different instruments playing scriptural music, *that is rāsa*. But the scriptures have accepted

this very thing in relation to Kṛṣṇa only, and rejected everyone else. Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* are engaged in *rāsa* for each other's pleasure, and in this there is such an increase in *prema* that you will not find it fully described in any scripture.

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

Just as milk is heated and boils over, such are the waves within Kṛṣṇa's heart that He Himself is unable to describe them. And it is the same for the *gopīs* also: when you have forgotten your own body, what can you describe? Therefore, a few elevated personalities, such as Vyāsadeva, in the *samādhi* of meditation saw this phenomenon from a position of neutrality. Otherwise, they would have become emotionally involved in it and become bewildered also. The *gopīs* were bewildered, Kṛṣṇa was bewildered, and unless one was seeing it from an aloof position, one would not be able to describe it. Therefore Vyāsa was able to describe a little of it.

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

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

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

The *gopīs* replied, "Who in this world can be a *guru* like You? You are our *gurudeva*. There is no instruction as beautiful as what you have just given us. Telling us to serve our husbands—there is no greater instruction than this, so You are our *guru* then. Previously we were offering *pūjā* to Kātyāyanī, and now we have attained Your service, so You are our *gurudeva*. Therefore

accept the *pūjā* we offered before, and if You don't, then You are not fulfilling Your words, and the reaction to committing *aparādha* will come upon You.

*ye yathā māṁ prapadyante
tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham*

Bhag.-gītā 4.11

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

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

jagau kalam vāma-dṛśāṁ manoharam

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.29.3

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

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

that a thief had come and is going away, where? In the direction from which that vibration came, so they ran there.

When I joined the mission, there was an older *brahmacārī* who would sit in the corner and chant *japa* with his back pointed outward so that nothing would distract him. Every day he would chant one *lākha* of *harināma*. One day while he was sitting quietly and chanting, he heard a noise, and not fully to his external senses, he looked to one side and saw a thief escaping with a money box. As he got up to pursue the thief, his *dhotī* began to fall down, so he clutched it with one hand. With the other hand he was still taking *harināma*—he didn't leave his *harināma*! In this very state, with one hand on his *harināma-mālā* and the other hand holding up his *dhotī*, yelling “Thief! Thief!” he ran after him. Then his foot got caught in his *dhotī* and he almost fell! At that time he was not completely to his external senses, so how could he catch the thief? He couldn't catch him, but he ran after him in that condition anyway. Finally more people came and the thief was caught.

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

During that *rāsa*, Kṛṣṇa's dearest *gopī* exhibited some jealous anger. Kṛṣṇa was thinking, “I am enjoying with so many *gopīs*; no one is as fortunate as Me.” But this *gopī* thought, “All are equal to Me? He told Me that I was the dearest to Him, and here I see that He is a liar. He is dancing and singing with everyone.” Therefore She exhibited *māna*, jealous anger. Then Kṛṣṇa grabbed Her and disappeared on the path. The *gopīs* began searching. Searching and searching, they saw a pair of footprints, and along with them was the footprint of some *kīśorī*. One group of *gopīs* understood whose footprint that was, but the *sakhīs* in the mood of Candrāvalī didn't understand whose it was.

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

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.30.28

The *gopīs* thought, “Certainly this particular *gopī* has worshipped Śrī Govinda the best, therefore He has left us and taken only Her with Him.” Those that were servants of that *gopī* recognised Her footprint, and were very, very happy. “Today Prabhu has taken our *sakhī* and van-

ished!” As they went further and further, these *gopīs* felt increasing *ānanda*, but the others were feeling separation. “We see that Her footprints stop here—where has She gone? Definitely that *gopī* had become tired, and therefore He lifted Her up and carried Her on His shoulders.”

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

There are so many beautiful things described there in chapters 29-33 of the Tenth Canto. In the end, they again met Kṛṣṇa. He appeared to them, a little ashamed, and said, “*Sakhīs*, I am certainly very grateful to you.” They put a question about loving reciprocation to Him, and His answer was very beautiful. Here we complete our summary of *śaradīya-rāsa*.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Rāya Rāmānanda, Svarūpa Dāmodara, and Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita were together at Ratha-yātrā. It was the day of Hera Pañcamī. At that time, Śrīvāsa saw that the *dāsīs* of Lakṣmīdevī had arrested the *gopīs* and were harassing them. As a form of taxation they were snatching their ornaments and punishing them. Very happily they were playing horns, laughing, and saying, “Hey cowherds! You work only with milk, and you want to be equal to Lakṣmīdevī? Today she will teach you a good lesson!”

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

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

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

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

“How?”

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

“Why with deception?”

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

Mahāprabhu said, “We don’t want to hear about Him stealing Her. Because the name of the particular *gopī* that He took is not mentioned in the *Bhāgavatam*, it could have been Candrāvalī

or any other *gopī*. Please tell us how Kṛṣṇa directly considers Rādhā only to be the best.”

Now Jayadeva will begin describing the *basantī-rāsa*: “My heart is palpitating, for I desire to write such a thing which in this life I have not written before, and which is not mentioned anywhere: that Kṛṣṇa will fall at the feet of Rādhikā. We know it well, but Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Controller, the cause of all causes, and the original *bhagavat-avatāra*. That He falls at the feet of His own potency who is the form of His *dāsī*—I don’t know if this is proper, but my heart is saying that without Kṛṣṇa putting His head at Her feet, She will not be appeased! I don’t know if I am able to write it.”

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

In the spring season, all of the fruits and flowers in Vṛndāvana come out. The she-crow starts her ‘*ku-ku*’ sound, the peacock starts his ‘*ke-kāh*’ sound, and it is as if the pigeons are playing the conchshell, making their ‘*ko-ko*’ sounds. They are all making their own sounds, and collectively it sounds as if they are playing a *śahanāī*. In this way all of the birds and animals become happy, and there is no one who is not dancing. Forming groups, Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* start dancing. All young unmarried girls are present there, and they had been waiting for one year. For dancing with Kṛṣṇa, for meeting Kṛṣṇa—for a whole year a fire of separation had been burning inside them. Not for themselves, not for lust, but for mitigating this separation.

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

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

With one *gopī* Kṛṣṇa was holding hands, with another He was dancing by jumping up and down, another He was embracing, and another He was kissing on the hand. Sometimes, with His eyes half-open in great *prema*, He would look in the direction of a particular *gopī*. He would follow a certain rhythm of racing behind one *gopī* after another, and this is how *basantī-rāsa* is described.

In a fraction of a second, as short as the blink of the eyes, thousands more *gopīs* arrived and started dancing. Rādhikā saw that at that time Kṛṣṇa’s *parama-aiśvarya śakti* was not working; He

had stopped it. Here He kept the cause behind pastimes, Yogamāyā, separate from Him. He placed all of these potencies far away by telling them, “At this time you will not do anything; for now you just sit quietly and watch.” In this *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa, everything was forgotten. Here, because *aīśvarya* was not manifest, Kṛṣṇa didn’t know that “I am Bhagavān,” and the *gopīs* didn’t know that “We are Īśvarī, we are the root of Yogamāyā.” All was forgotten.

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

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

There is milk: add some sugar, and it becomes sweet. Mix a little *kevrā*, then a little camphor and other things, and it becomes more and more sweet and tasteful. Like this Rādhikā has Her own uniqueness, and for making Kṛṣṇa even happier, She exhibited some *māna*. She left the *rāsa* and went to a *kuñja*, but then what happened? Upon arriving there She thought, “Why did I leave Kṛṣṇa’s association? He didn’t leave Me; I left Him. If there is any unfortunate woman, it is Me. There is no one as unfortunate as Me.”

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

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

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

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

They said, “Where?” The *sakhīs* then led Rādhikā and the others to the *kuñja*. They peered into the entrance of the *kuñja* and saw that His face was covered. They couldn’t tell if He was crying, or sleeping, or what He was doing. Then, moving closer, they saw that He was sleeping. His eyes were closed, and His face was a little covered. The *gopīs* exchanged hand signals, because at that time, their supreme enemy, the flute, was hanging loosely in His hand! They thought that they should take it. They did not consider for a moment that they might be entering a trap, but just that they should take it.

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

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

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

Understanding everything, Kṛṣṇa allowed His hand to become slack. Thinking Him to be asleep, slowly Rādhikā crept near to Him and saw that He was apparently deeply asleep. When someone is sleeping lightly, they can be easily awakened, but when someone is in deep sleep, you cannot easily awaken them. Kṛṣṇa appeared to be sleeping like that. Quickly She snatched the flute from His hand, and at once the *gopīs* ran from the *kuñja*. As they were all running with their long hair swinging to and fro, Kṛṣṇa opened His eyes, saying, “Hari, Hari...hey, where has My flute gone?” He ran outside the *kuñja* and said to the *gopīs*, “You have stolen My flute!”

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

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

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

Śyāmali pleased Rādhikā by giving Her a flower garland which emanated a special fragrance. Rādhikā thought, “Where has this fragrance come from? Whose fragrance is this?” Knowing it to be related to Kṛṣṇa, She was very pleased.

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

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

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

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

Although we don’t have the qualification to engage in *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* of this topic, in brief we have tried to describe this *rāsa* and what sentiments of love came in it. Tasting and tasting this, just see how the condition of Mahāprabhu became! It was a wonderful thing! Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāya Rāmānanda would describe it to Him. I am only an ordinary person full of *anarthas*, but in that place where Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāya Rāmānanda are describing this, Kṛṣṇa Himself, full of *rādhā-bhāva*, will be there as a listener in the form of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and He receives so much *ānanda* from it. Therefore, we will silently remember this *basantī-rāsa*, and when one day genuine spiritual greed arises in our hearts, we will be able to directly serve this *rāsa*.

Chapter Five

Niśānta-bhajana

(1)

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

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

Cait.-carit. Madhya-līlā 20.117

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

*kṛṣṇa-bahirmukha haya bhogavānchā kare
nikaṣṭha māyā tāre jāpaṭiyā dhare*

Prema-vivarta

When the *jīva* becomes adverse to Bhagavān, Māyādevī pounces on him and arrests him.

*bhayaṁ dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syād
īśād apetasya viparyayo 'smṛtiḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 11.2.37

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

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

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

When the *jīva* becomes opposed to Bhagavān and *māyā* pounces on him, some desires arise in his heart. After fulfilling these desires, he realises that, "All of this is actually not happiness after all." A baby sees fire, and thinking that it appears very pleasing, gets up to touch it, but his mother says, "If you touch the fire you'll be burnt." So she forbids him and takes him in her lap. But he won't listen and jumps out of her lap to try again, so what will she do then? She grabs his hand and touches it momentarily to the fire, and upon feeling the burning sensation, the baby pulls his hand away. Never again will he go near the fire. In the same way that Bhagavān is very merciful, Māyādevī is also very merciful. Allowing the *jīva* to enjoy and helping him to attain what he desires until the *jīva* realises, "In reality this is poisonous!", Bhagavān then begins to bring the *jīva* towards Himself.

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

Cait.-carit. Madhya-līlā 19.151

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

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

Bhag.-gītā 2.69

When *sādhus* and Vaiṣṇavas are awake, it is night for worldly people, and what is day for worldly people is night for the *sādhu*. Those that have been arrested by *māyā* are asleep to everything related to Bhagavān, and the *sādhus* that are awake to Bhagavān are asleep to the enjoying spirit of worldly people. Therefore, for those not engaged in *bhajana*, it is *niśā*, night. They are trapped in the night of sense enjoyment. When the night is coming to an end it is called *niśānta*, and what brings about the end of the conditioned soul’s night?

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

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 3.25.25

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

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

It is compared to the time when the night is completed and symptoms of the daybreak begin to appear. The peacock makes the ‘*ke-kāh*’ sound, and the sparrows begin making the ‘*chā-chā*’ sound. The birds’ ‘*chā-chā*’ sound is like the devotees relishing *hari-kathā*, and the ‘*ke-kāh*’ sound indicates that having accepted *dīkṣā* from *gurudeva*, the stars that were so luminous during the night—meaning the attraction for sense enjoyment which until now was shining for the conditioned soul—are no longer visible. The eastern horizon begins to turn red, and now we understand that the night has come to an end, meaning that the conditioned soul’s wandering in the material world will soon come to an end. This is *niśānta-bhajana*, and is the dawning of *śraddhā*, faith. And where does this faith come from? The thing which gives *śraddhā* to the heart of a *jīva* and moves him in the direction of liberation and *bhakti* more than anything else is

sādhū-saṅga. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself especially came in the dress of a devotee and went door to door giving *kṛṣṇa-nāma*.

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

Cait.-carit. Madhya-līlā 7.128

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

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

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

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

Cait.-carit. Madhya-līlā 6.242

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

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

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

Cait.-carit. Antya-līlā 20.18

“By chanting it at any time or place, even while eating or lying down, *harināma* gives all perfection.”

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

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

It says there that there is so much *rasa* in the *mahā-mantra* that there is no need to chant any other names. Mahāprabhu said, “I had faith in what My *guruji* had said, and I started chanting *harināma*. After chanting and chanting, one day I saw that very *Nāma* personified standing before Me in an attractive three-fold bending posture, attired in the dress of a cowherd boy, playing the flute, smiling, and looking in My direction with dancing eyebrows. Through the medium of My eyes, My heart left My body, and laughing, crying, and rolling on the ground, I forgot everything.”

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

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

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

(2)

Niśānta-bhajana is of two types: one is within the realm of *sādhana*, and the other is within the realm of perfection, and is *rāgānugā-bhajana*. In *sādhana* it is the first stage of *bhakti* and is compared to the end of the night in Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā*. In Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, when night has passed and day-break is dawning it is called *niśānta-līlā*. It lasts for three hours—from three o’clock until six o’clock. By the accumulation of *sukṛti* we attain *sādhya-saṅga*, and when the seed of *śraddhā* is

planted within us, it is *niśānta-bhajana*. And as the word *niśā* means night, here it refers to the darkness of night when the *jīva* is opposed to Kṛṣṇa.

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

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.51.53

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

*bhaktistu bhāgavad-
bhaktasaṅgena parijāyate
satsaṅgaḥ prāpyate pumbhiḥ
sukṛtaiḥ purva sancitaiḥ*

Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa 4.33

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

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

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

prostitute was paining him like a thorn in his heart, so he was unable to sleep and all night he just cried and worried.

In another place that prostitute had repented and began searching for him. In the night she took shelter in that same *mandira* not knowing that he was also there. She also just cried and cried and was unable to sleep. When the next morning came, they saw each other, and crying she at once went and fell at his feet. With great affection he embraced her, and the previous incident was forgotten. They returned to their life of misconduct, but at that time no one understood what great benefit they received on that day. That day had happened to be Nṛsiṃha Caturdaśī, and all day neither of them had drunk any water or eaten anything. They had fasted all day, and had also remained awake all night, so they received the benefit of observing Nṛsiṃha Caturdaśī. And whose *mandira* was it that they had stayed in that night? Nṛsiṃhadeva's. Unknowingly they received such a great result from this that in his next life he became Prahlāda Mahārāja, and she became his wife.

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

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

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

Cait-carit. Madhya-līlā 22.62

“If I just perform *bhajana* of Kṛṣṇa, then everything is accomplished.” Such a high quality type of faith is called *śraddhā*. If that *śraddhā* is placed in the words of the scriptures, in the words of the *guru*, and in the words of the Vaiṣṇavas, then everything will come from that. “By following whatever they say, everything will be alright. Even if everything in my life is destroyed, then let it be; I will continue executing *bhagavad-bhajana*”—this is *śraddhā*, even though there may be *anarthas* in our *bhajana*. There is *aniṣṭhatā-bhakti* or unsteady devotion and *niṣṭhatā-bhakti* or firm devotion. In *aniṣṭhatā-bhakti*, there are *utsāhamayī* or false confidence, *ghanataralā* or sporadic endeavour, *vyūḍha-vikalpā* or indecision, *taraṅga-raṅgiṇī* or delighting in the material facilities which come from *bhakti*, *viṣaya-saṅgarā* or battling with the desires for sense pleasure, and *niyamākṣamā* or the inability to uphold vows. Even though all of these may remain, if one's faith is of good quality, then upon attaining *sādhu-saṅga* his internal nature will gradually change.

When one understands that upon attaining *sādhū-saṅga* the night—meaning his conditioned state of existence—will be finished soon, his faith is of good quality.

The end of the night heralds the first of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in the daytime. The peacock is sitting in the upper part of the *kadamba* tree, and the koel is seated in the upper part of the mango tree. The parrot is seated on a branch of the pomegranate tree, and because his beak is red, he blends in with the red buds of the pomegranate tree. The female parrot eats grapes, so she is sitting on the grape vine. All are ready and waiting for Vṛndādevī to give her order, thinking, “When will Vṛndāji say?” Seeing that the appropriate time has come, Vṛndādevī gives the order to the birds, “Begin singing!” So they start making the sound ‘*kala-rava*’. What is the meaning of *kala-rava*? *Rava* means sound, and *kala* indicates the flute, so this sound tells Kṛṣṇa that it is time to awaken and play the flute. The koel, the hummingbird, and the male and female parrots start singing, and being intoxicated by making these musical sounds, it seems that Kāmadeva is blowing the conchshell. The male parrot is awakening Kṛṣṇa, and the female parrot is awakening Śrīmatijī. The peacock is saying ‘*ke*’ which means ‘who?’ He is referring to Kṛṣṇa, meaning “Who can conquer the great mountain of Rādhikā’s jealous anger, shyness, and patience, which no one else can cross over?” By making this sound he is saying, “Hey Kṛṣṇa! Please awaken!” The female peacock is making the ‘*kāh*’ sound, which also means ‘who?’, meaning, “Who is it that, even though Her heart is in the form of a seedling, can overpower the mad elephant Kṛṣṇa, who is directly Parabrahma Himself? Rādhikā.” Then everyone awakens and the *līlā* begins.

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

In the same way the *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are supremely merciful. If they see that one’s *sukṛti* is not strong, they somehow arrange that his *sukṛti* will be strengthened. For those who already have *śraddhā* they strengthen their *śraddhā* by bestowing upon them the gift of their own company. If they see that someone has no desire for *bhakti*, they arrange for them to hear *hari-kathā*. A *paramahansa* Vaiṣṇava—who is qualified to cross the upper limit of the *madhyama-adhikārī* stage—a topmost Vaiṣṇava who is *nindādi-śūnya* or free from the tendency to criticise others will cry and be so upset for us. In the same way that Kṛṣṇa cries and is upset for us, so the *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are so upset for us that we cannot possibly estimate it. The *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas suffer so much for us, just like a mother when she is raising her small child. At night the mother is sleeping, and the baby’s crying awakens her. Then the child passes stool and cries even more. Will the poor woman be able to sleep? She undergoes so much suffering and difficulty in the upbringing of her child, and the father knows little of it. Only the mother can fully know it. Similarly the *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are supremely merciful. Making different plans they make *śraddhā* arise in others and then always try to strengthen that *śraddhā*. Their first duty towards us is to

awaken our faith in *harināma*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, and this is *niśānta-bhajana*. If someone is to begin performing *bhajana*, then for the welfare of their faith they must understand one thing: that Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān, and especially that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself. This must be understood first—that Mahāprabhu gave His everything to the *jīvas*, whereas Kṛṣṇa did not give as much. Kṛṣṇa came in the form of Mahāprabhu with the *bhāva* of Rādhikā: what is the meaning? We are not referring here to the three sentiments described in this verse (*Cait.-carit. Ādi-līlā* 1.6):

*śrī-rādhāyāḥ praṇaya-mahimā kīḍṣo vānayaivā-
svādyo yenādbhuta-madhurimā kīḍṣo vā madiyaḥ
saukhyam cāsyā mad-anubhavataḥ kīḍṣam veti lobhāt
tad-bhāvāḍhyaḥ samajani śaci-garbha-sindhau harīnduḥ*

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

These three sentiments of Rādhikā can be explained to a new devotee at a later stage. Here the *bhāva* of Rādhikā that we mean is the sentiment of kindness and *vātsalya* for the *jīvas*. Is this sentiment of mercy found more in Kṛṣṇa or in Rādhikā? More in Rādhikā, and She is the one who like a mother nurtures us. Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the one who is the very personification of kindness for us, and Her manifestation in this world is the *guru*. All of the kindness of Bhagavān is found in the *guru*.

*saṁsāra-dāvānala-liḍha-loka
trāṇāya kārūṇya-ghanāghanatvam*

Śrī Gurvaṣṭakam 1

“The *guru* showers his kindness upon the *jīvas* who are suffering in the burning fire of material existence.”

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

*anarpita-carīm cirāt karuṇayāvatiṛṇaḥ kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śriyam*

Cait-carit. Ādi-līlā 1.4

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

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

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka 2

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

This is His first instruction: the *nāma* is Svayam Kṛṣṇa. There is an incident from the time of Narottama Ṭhākura and Lokanātha Gosvāmī concerning this point. Once when Narottama was chanting *japa*, a farmer approached him asking for a pail of water. Not understanding the full glories of the *nāma*—that it is nondifferent from *nāmī* in all respects—he put aside his *mālā* to perform this charitable activity. Lokanātha Gosvāmī, knowing that *nāma* and *nāmī* are one and the same and that service to the *nāma* is service to Kṛṣṇa, detected a fault in Narottama Ṭhākura. There is no difference between Them. In *sādhana* and in perfection the *nāma* is Kṛṣṇa.

Chanting and chanting the *nāma*, Mahāprabhu said, “I saw Kṛṣṇa in the form of Gopāla standing before Me.” The *nāma* and Kṛṣṇa Himself are nondifferent, as Mahāprabhu has said in this verse from the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. Bhagavān descended as an *avatāra* in the form of so many names—why? Because there are many different types of people in the world. Their *niṣṭhā* and *śraddhā* are of many types. Their previously acquired natures are different, and even in perfection their internal *svarūpas* are different. Therefore Bhagavān has descended in the forms of many different names. He has so many names like Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa, Brahman, Paramātmā, Jagannātha, and also Īśvara, Allah, Khuda, and God. But we can divide all of these names into two categories—secondary and primary. Names where there is no specification are secondary, like Īśvara. What is the meaning of Īśvara? In this name is there a particular form or shape specified? Just that He is the controller, but there is no specification. And Om̐ can mean Kālī or Gaurī, but does not spec-

ify any particular form. And Jagannātha—who does that refer to? All incarnations of Viṣṇu can be called Jagannātha. God is also a secondary name. ‘G’ stands for generator, meaning creator, ‘o’ stands for operator, meaning the one who maintains and nurtures, and ‘d’ stands for destroyer. Allah means He who is the greatest of all, just like our conception of Brahman. It is also a secondary name. Hari means one who steals the consciousness, and is a primary name of Kṛṣṇa. It can also refer to Narahari and Rāmacandra along with Kṛṣṇa—these are the three *parāvasthā* (superior) incarnations.

Nṛsiṁha, Vāmana, Kalki, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa and Hari are all primary names. Primary names are also of two types. Those names which refer to Bhagavān’s aspect of *aiśvarya* are the secondary primary names, and the names of Kṛṣṇa are the main primary names. Then there is some further consideration within the names of Kṛṣṇa. According to the gradation of importance of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, there is gradation in His names also. Of the names Rāsa-bihārī and Yaśodā-nandana, which name is more special? Rāsa-bihārī. Like this, within the main primary names are supremely primary names like Rādhānātha, Rādhā-kānta, and Gopīnātha. They contain some special *śakti* and indicate a special pastime of Kṛṣṇa. For instance, all of His *mādhurya* is included within the Rāsa-bihārī name, and of all of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, this name indicates the essence of them. By chanting this name these particular pastimes will be illuminated within the heart of the chanter.

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

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

Therefore He has said *nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis*: all of His *śaktis* have been invested within these names, and they differ according to the particular name. And no strict rules have been imposed on the chanting of His names. Suppose someone is seated facing south and saying the *gāyatrī-mantra*—is this correct, or not? No, because a *niyam* or rule has been imposed on chanting *gāyatrī*. But if someone sits to chant *harināma* facing south, will there be any harm? No consideration of time or place has been imposed on the chanting of *harināma*. Mahāprabhu said that even while eating and resting we should take *harināma*. Will we sit to chant *gāyatrī* or to perform *arcana* with contaminated hands? No, because it will be *aparādha*. But sometimes when we sneeze, we say “Hari, Hari,” and when we stumble over something we say, “Rāma,

Rāma,” and there is no fault in this because in the chanting of *harināma* there are no such considerations of time, place, or qualification.

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

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

Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa

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

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

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka 1

The first effect of the *nāma* is that it cleanses the mirror of the heart, the second effect is that it extinguishes the fire of misery in the forest of birth and death, the third effect is that like the rays of the moon it causes the flower of the *jīvas*' ultimate good fortune to bloom, and the fourth effect is that it bestows the innermost transcendental knowledge which is compared to a young bride. The fifth effect is that it increases the ocean of transcendental pleasure, the sixth effect is that it makes us taste the highest nectar at every step, and the seventh is that it thoroughly cools and purifies us inside and out. These are the seven effects of chanting *harināma*, and after this it bestows *prema*, making eight. This gradual awakening beginning with cleansing the mirror of the heart is *niśānta-bhajana*, and after this, when one meditates with *rasika-bhāva* on the eight parts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's day, His direct service is attained.

Chapter Six

Śriyā Śuka

A reason given as to why Śukadeva Gosvāmī did not directly mention Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's name in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is because Mahārāja Parikṣit had only seven days to live, and uttering Rādhikā's name would have thrown Śukadeva into ecstatic trance for six months. In the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, it is mentioned *ṣṛī rādhā-nāma mantrena murchā sanmasikī bhavet noccareta mata spaṣṭam parikṣit hit kṛn munih*: if Śukadeva Gosvāmī uttered the name of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, he would at once remember Her pastimes. Due to his *rādhā-prema* he would have become *aviṣṭa-citta*, excited and fixed in remembering Her pastimes and activities in the service of Kṛṣṇa. He would then have become internally fixed on Kṛṣṇa and externally inert for six months. But Parikṣit Mahārāja had only seven days to live, and Śukadeva wanted him to have the benefit of hearing the entire *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Why would Śukadeva Gosvāmī go into an ecstatic trance at the mere mention of the name of Śrīmatī Rādhikā? In his commentary on his own *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, Sanātana Gosvāmī writes, “Śrīmatī Rādhikā was the worshipable goddess of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, so whenever he uttered Her name, he would become *aviṣṭa-citta*, internally spiritually excited and externally inert. So in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* he has given the name of Rādhikā and other *gopīs* in a hidden way.” Śukadeva Gosvāmī has therefore not uttered Her name directly, but only indirectly. According to the *rasa-śāstra*, an indirect utterance is better than a direct one.

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

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 11.21.35

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

So Śukadeva Gosvāmī also uttered the *gopīs*' names indirectly, as in ‘*anayārādhito*’ (*Śrīmad-Bhāg.* 10.30.28), which indicates that *gopī* by whom Kṛṣṇa was perfectly worshipped, Śrīmatī Rādhikā. A *rasika-bhakta* can understand that it was Śrīmatī Rādhikā who had most perfectly wor-

shipped Kṛṣṇa, whom Kṛṣṇa had taken away from the *rāsa-sthalī* or the arena of the *rāsa* dance, and whom He had disappeared with in the forest. It was only this *gopī* whose head and feet Kṛṣṇa had decorated in a secluded place. Even upon uttering the word ‘*ārādhito*’, which indicates Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and sounds so much like Her name, Śukadeva Gosvāmī at once started becoming *aviṣṭa-citta*. But after becoming so emotional, he then changed the subject.

Also in verse 2.4.14 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śukadeva Gosvāmī used the word ‘*rādhāsā*’, meaning Kṛṣṇa’s unequalled opulence, as an indirect reference to Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Sanātana Gosvāmī says that in the five chapters of the Tenth Canto of the *Bhāgavatam* which describe *rāsa*, in the *Gopī-gīta*, in the *Bhramara-gīta*, and in the *Uddhava-sandeśa*, Śukadeva Gosvāmī has also carefully used other words to indirectly denote Śrīmatī Rādhikā. He has used the words *kāścid dohaṁ hitvā* in verse 10.29.5, the words *tais taih padais* in verse 10.30.26, the words *yām gopīm anayat* in verse 10.30.35, the words *sā vadhūr anvatapyata* in verse 10.30.38, and the words *kācit karāmbujam śaurer* in verse 10.32.4. Each of these quotes denote Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the other *gopīs*. Those who are *rasika-bhaktas*, whose eyes are open, can see the names of the *gopīs* and the name of Śrīmatī Rādhikā everywhere, but those who are blind cannot. Therefore we are especially grateful to Sanātana Gosvāmī, for without his revealing these truths to us, we could never understand.

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

Once he flew into Kṛṣṇa’s garden at Nandagrāma where he began singing ‘Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa’ as sweetly as Śrīmatī Rādhikā Herself would, and in the same melodious tone. Hearing this, Kṛṣṇa was very attracted, and noticing this beautiful parrot sitting in the pomegranate tree, He said, “Please speak some more.” Then the parrot began to lament, “Oh, I am very wretched and ‘*akṛtajñā*’, ungrateful, because I was sitting in the hand of Śrīmatī Rādhikā Herself, and She was feeding me pomegranate seeds, milk, and rice. She was teaching me how to sing ‘Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa’ very sweetly, but I flew away and have come here, so I am very unfortunate.” Then Kṛṣṇa took the parrot in His hand and began to fondle it. In the meantime, Lalitā and Viśākhā came and said, “This parrot belongs to our mistress, Śrīmatī Rādhikā. It is so dear to Her that She cannot live without it, so please give it to us, and we will return it to Rādhikā.”

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

They tried many times to call the parrot, but it would not come to them. Then they began scolding Kṛṣṇa, saying, “Whatever comes to You never gets returned to its rightful owner!” Next they approached Mother Yaśodā and explained the situation, so Yaśodā came and snatched the parrot away from Kṛṣṇa, saying, “You are always doing nothing but playing with animals and birds!

It is time for Your bath. Your father is prepared to take his meal, but without You he cannot take it. So come at once!” Then she gave the parrot to Lalitā and Viśākhā and dragged Kṛṣṇa away.

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

Because the first three cantos of the *Bhāgavatam* are very philosophical, in accordance with the nature of a woman Pārvatī fell asleep as she was hearing it. She wanted to hear only the romantic pastimes, especially how Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa would meet and walk and laugh together. Now and then the parrot would reply, “Yes, yes,” and Śaṅkara would carry on eagerly reciting, thinking that Pārvatī was listening.

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

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

“I want to kill it.”

“Why?”

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

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

“One becomes immortal.”

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

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

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

Another analogy can help us to understand this point. The naked body of a woman is not so beautiful, but if she covers her body with a fine transparent cloth and then water is poured on that cloth, each of her features are revealed. This is how to appreciate the beautiful features of a woman. Similarly, the glories of Śrīmatī Rādhikā are enhanced through the thin covering supplied by the author, the supremely intelligent Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Covering Her supreme position also enhances the ultimate revelation of those glories, as things obtained with hardship are appreciated more than those easily attained. Therefore the attainment of *prema* must necessarily include the overcoming of obstacles.

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

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

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

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