

ŚRĪ-ŚRĪ ŚIKṢĀṢṬAKAM

— *The Eight Instructions of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu* —

with the commentary of
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verse 1

*ceto darpaṇa mārjanam bhava mahā davāgni nirvāpanam
śreyaḥ kairava candrikā vitaraṇam vidyā vadhū jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi vardhanam pratipadam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam
sarvātma snapanam param vijayate śrī kṛṣṇa saṅkīrtanam*

cetaḥ - of the heart; *darpaṇa* - the mirror; *mārjanam* - cleansing; *bhava* - material existence; *mahā* - great; *dava* - forest; *agni* - fire; *nirvāpanam* - extinguishing; *śreyaḥ* - of welfare; *kairava* - white lotus; *candrikā* - moonlight; *vitaraṇam* - distributes; *vidyā* - knowledge; *vadhū* - bride; *jīvanam* - life; *ānanda* - transcendental bliss; *ambudhi* - ocean; *vardhanam* - increasing; *prati* - every; *padam* - step; *pūrṇa* - full; *amṛta* - nectar; *āsvādanam* - relishing; *sarva* - all; *ātma* - self; *snapanam* - bathes; *param* - supreme; *vijayate* - victory; *śrī kṛṣṇa saṅkīrtanam* - the congregational chanting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name.

All glories to the congregational chanting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's holy name, which cleanses the mirror of the heart and mind, which extinguishes the forest fire of material existence, which spreads moonlight on the white lotus of good fortune, which is the life of the bride named transcendental knowledge, which increases the ocean of transcendental bliss, which makes us relish full nectar at every step and which thus showers the whole self!

One of the reasons for Śrī-Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the purifier of the age of Kali, to descend to the material world was to bless the people by giving them the transcendental love of the inhabitants of Vraja for Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya Caritāmṛta says:

*nija gūḍha kārya tomāra prema āsvādana
ānuṣaṅge premamaya koile tribhuvana*

“The secret reason for Your descent is to taste love of God. To fill the three worlds with this love was a side effect.”

With these two duties Mahāprabhu was encumbered throughout His manifest appearance. When the Lord was preaching the *saṅkīrtana* all over Nadiya, He ordered His companions: *yāhā tāhā prema phala deho yāre tāre* – “Give the fruit of love of God to anyone at any place!” After He took *sannyāsa*, the Lord began to travel to South India and to Vraja, distributing *prema* all over India, even to the lions, tigers, vines, trees and other creatures of the Jhārikhaṇḍa-forest. In the final eighteen years of His manifest pastimes He stayed at Jagannātha Purī and became absorbed in the internal reasons for His descent: to taste the love of Śrī Rādhā. There was no opportunity for Him to write books in order to preach this *prema*, but He personally instructed His followers such as Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana in this regard and had this work done through them. He Himself was absorbed in transcendental emotions along with Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya at Purī and left only eight verses with the most confidential and essential teachings

behind for the people of the world. The teachings of Śrīman Mahāprabhu are the essence of all teachings. Everything auspicious and desirable that could give peace and satisfaction He thus hung around the necks of the people of the world, like a necklace containing eight pearls. Śrīla Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has included this *Śikṣāṣṭakam* in the final chapter of his *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta*.

In the first verse the Lord says: “The Śrī Kṛṣṇa *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, which cleanses the mirror of the heart, which extinguishes the great forest fire of material existence, which is the moonlight that causes the lotus flower of auspiciousness to blossom, which is the very life of the bride of transcendental knowledge, which extends the ocean of transcendental bliss, which makes us taste the full nectar at every step and which bathes the self (satisfying the senses, the mind, the intelligence upto the pure spirit soul), is supreme.” *Prema*, or love of God, will be manifest in anyone who offenselessly chants this *saṅkīrtana* that was preached to the world by Śrīman Mahā-prabhu. Śrīmat Sanātana Gosvāmī wrote in his *Bṛhad Bhāga-vatāmṛta* (2.3.164-165):

*nāma-saṅkīrtanaṁ proktaṁ kṛṣṇasya prema sampadi
baliṣṭhaṁ sādhanam śreṣṭhaṁ paramākarṣa mantravad
tad eva manyate bhakteḥ phalam tad rasikair janaiḥ
bhagavat prema sampattau sadaivāvyabhicārataḥ*

“The most intimate and powerful means to attain the treasure of love of Kṛṣṇa is *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. It is supremely attractive, just like a *mantra*. That is why the *rasikas* (connoisseurs) also consider it to be the fruit of devotion!”

In his own commentary on this verse, Sanātana Gosvāmī writes: *na nu sarveṣāṁ api sādhana bhaktiprakārāṇāṁ premaiva phalam ityabhipretam satyam nāma saṅkīrtane sati premṇah avāśyambhāvitvāt upacāreṇa tad eva phalam manyate iti* – “Someone may say: ‘The fruit of all *sādhana bhakti* is *prema*, and the chanting of the holy name is just a means of its attainment. How can you then call chanting the fruit of devotion?’ The answer is: ‘Because the appearance of *prema* is inevitable through the practice of chanting, it has been called the fruit of devotion as well!’”

Śrīman Mahāprabhu therefore opens His *Sikṣāṣṭakam* by saying *param vijayate śrī kṛṣṇa saṅkīrtanam* – “Victory to the chanting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s names! It is on the summit of all spiritual practices and spiritual goals.” Śrīman Mahāprabhu taught Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī:

*bhajanera madhye śreṣṭha nava vidha bhakti
kṛṣṇa prema kṛṣṇa dite dhare mahā śakti
tāra madhye sarva śreṣṭha - nāma-saṅkīrtana
niraparādhe nāma hoite hoy prema dhana
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā)*

“Of all sorts of worship the nine kinds of devotion mentioned in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* (7.5.23) are the best. They have the great power to bestow Kṛṣṇa and love of Kṛṣṇa. Of all these nine practices, the best is *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. When one chants

offenselessly one finds the treasure of love of Kṛṣṇa.” In this there is no consideration of time and place, qualification or disqualification. While beginning His teaching of Śikṣāṣṭakam, the Lord said: *harṣe prabhu kohe - śuno svarūpa rāma rāya, nāma-saṅkīrtana kalau parama upāya* “The Lord blissfully said: Listen, Svarūpa and Rāma Rāya! In the age of Kali the best means of deliverance is *nāma-saṅkīrtana!*” It is both the best means and the highest goal!

The meaning of *saṅkīrtana* is “full glorification”. This has two meanings. 1) Loudly singing with *mṛdaṅga* and *karatalas* is called *saṅkīrtana*. In his commentary on the verse *kṛṣṇa varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam* (Bhāg. 11.5.29), Śrī Jīva Gosvāmīpāda writes: *saṅkīrtanam bahubhir militvā śrī kṛṣṇa gāna sukham* – “*Saṅkīrtana* means meeting with many people to blissfully sing about Śrī Kṛṣṇa”, and *nāma kīrtanam cedam uccair eva praśastam* – “It is certainly the best to chant the holy name loudly.” He provides the following evidence along with a logical argument (in *Bhakti Sandarbha*, chapter 269): *te ca prāṇimātrānām eva paramopakartāraḥ kim uta sveṣām yathoktam nārasimhe śrī prahlādena te santah sarvabhūtānām nirupādihika bāndhavāḥ. ye nṛsimha bhavan nāma gāyanty uccair muḍānvitāḥ* – “Those who are chanting loudly, are not only benefitting themselves, but also all other living entities.” When Prahlāda Mahāśaya praises Lord Nṛsimhadeva in the *Nṛsimha Purāṇa*, he says: “O Lord! Those great souls who loudly chant Your holy name in paramount bliss should be known as the greatest friends of all living entities!” In *Caitanya Bhāgavata, Ādi Khaṇḍa*, chapter 14, Śrī Haridāsa Ṭhākura said about loud chanting:

*japile se kṛṣṇa nāma āpani se tare
ucca saṅkīrtane para upakara kore
ataeva ucca kori kīrtana korile
śata guṇa phala hoy sarva śāstre bole
keho āpanāre mātra koroye poṣaṇa
keho vā poṣana kore sahasreka jana
duite ke boḍo bhāvi bujhaho āpane
ei abhiprāya guṇa ucca saṅkīrtane*

“When doing *japa* (soft or mental chanting on beads on one’s own) one only redeems oneself, but the loud chanter also benefits others. Therefore all the scriptures say that loud *kīrtana* is a hundred times more beneficial. Some only feed themselves and others feed a thousand people. You can easily understand which one is the best of the two. Such is the glory of loud chanting!”

2) “Full *kīrtana*” can also mean: Aiming the mind at relishing the sweetness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s names and thus chanting the name with full attention, great love and affection. This means one should not chant simply to complete a compulsory daily number of rounds just like a machine, without fixing one’s mind. In his *Krama Sandarbha*-commentary on *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* (6.2.20), Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī writes: *śrī bhagavan nāma grahaṇam khalu dvidhā bhavati kevalatvena sneha-saṁyuktatvena ca. tatra pūrveṇāpi prāpayatyeva sadyas tallokaṁ tan nāma. pareṇa ca tat sāmīpyam api*

prāpayati. mayi bhaktir hi bhūtānām amṛtatvāya kalpate. diṣṭyā yad āsīn mat sneho bhavatīnām mad āpana iti tad vākyāt. “One can chant the Lord’s names in two ways: *kevala* (mere chanting) and *sneha samyukta* (with love). An offenseless person who merely chants will attain the abode of the Lord only (*sālokya*), but one who chants with love will be able to reside near the Lord (*sāmīpya*). Śrī Kṛṣṇa told the *gopīs* when they came to Kurukṣetra (*Bhāg.* 10.82.45): “O Beautiful girls! The living beings attain *amṛta* (immortality or the nectar of love) by being devoted to Me, and fortunately the love you feel for Me has forcibly attracted Me to you!” These words of the Lord proclaim that love is the best way to attract Him. The same goes for loudly chanting the Lord’s name with love. The name will attract the named. In this way doing *kīrtana* with love is justly called *saṅkīrtana*, complete glorification.

In this first verse Śrīman Mahāprabhu has glorified the chanting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s names in seven specific ways. First of all He says:

1) *ceto darpaṇa mārjanam*: The chanting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s holy name cleanses the mirror of the heart. Because the hearts and minds of non-devotees are stained and covered by desires for sensual enjoyment, the all-pervading Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His form, abode etc. cannot be reflected on them. The clearer a mirror is, the clearer an object can be reflected in it; similarly, the more the mirror of one’s heart is cleansed through the process of Śrī Kṛṣṇa *saṅkīrtana*, the more the sweet forms and qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa can be reflected in it. The Padma Purāṇa states:

*kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya viṣṇor amita tejasā
duritāni vilīyante tamāmsīva dinodaye
nānyat paśyāmi jantūnām vihāya hari kīrtanam
sarva pāpa praśamanam prāyaścittam dvijottama*

“O best of *brāhmaṇas*! Through the chanting of the holy names of the all-powerful Lord Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa, all sins are destroyed, just as the darkness is destroyed by the appearance of day. I cannot find any better way for the living entities to be purified from all sins than the process of *hari-kīrtana*!”

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī comments on this: *sarva pāpa pra-śamanarūpam prāyaścittam anyat na paśyāmi anyasya savāsana pāpa kṣapaṇāśakteḥ* – “I cannot see any other means by which one can atone for all sins and destroy desires to commit them as well.” In order to get the result of any kind of spiritual practice, one must first purify the heart. Without purification of the heart no spiritual practice can become successful. The paths of *jñāna* (intellectual spiritual realisation) and others may destroy sins also, but along with the sins they are burning the heart. Only the chanting of the holy name can wash the mind and heart, just like Gaṅgā-water, and make it pure and clear. There is another valuable reason why the heart of a chanter easily becomes purified. If the Lord hears His holy name uttered by whosoever He becomes very attracted and will give him either His personal audience or will shower him with His grace in some other way. In this way, by the grace of the great

saint faith and affection awakens and the goal is reached by taking shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Guru. In the devotional scriptures this is called *bhajana-kriyā*.

2) *bhava mahā davāgni nirvāpanam*: The word “*bhava*” means that one’s mind is fixed on a dead material object. The material world is like a burning forest fire, consisting of the three kinds of misery (misery caused by the elements, by other living beings, or by one’s own mind) which are burning all the conditioned souls as a forest fire burns up the trees, vines and animals of a forest. The example of the forest fire is very befitting, because nobody knows how a forest fire starts. The friction between the trees and vines may cause it. In the same way, the burning fire of material existence is caused simply by the friction between different wicked desires in the hearts of the conditioned souls. The living entity is personally responsible for this, and no one else.

Once a preceptor told his disciple to bring some fire for cooking from a nearby village. The disciple went out to look for fire, but he could not find it, so he asked his teacher: “Where should I go to get this fire?” The preceptor thought: “What a good-for-nothing, he cannot even bring some fire!”, and angrily told the disciple “Go and bring it from hell!”. The disciple was a simple soul and he went to the realm of Yamarāja, eager to follow his *guru*’s order. Yama Mahārāja, the lord of hell, was unable to stay calm when he saw the determination of the dedicated disciple and he took him to his own realm. On the order of his teacher, the disciple asked Yama Mahārāja for some fire there. Yamarāja said: “O child! There is no facility for making fire here! Surely, many people are burned in hellfire here at every moment, but they brought that fire along with them. It was not here before they brought it for their own punishment!” The conditioned souls are burning in the fire of the results of their own deeds (*karma*) at every moment. That is why the example of the forest fire is given here.

Secondly, when the vines and trees are burning in the forest fire, they cannot protect themselves by running away anywhere. They have no choice but to simply stand there and wait until they are burned to death. Similarly, the conditioned souls, who are bound up by *māyā* (illusion) and who are suffering from the threefold miseries day and night, have no means to free themselves from this burning other than to turn to Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. Just as there is no other means to extinguish a forest fire than a great shower from a raincloud, so there is no other means to become free from the threefold miseries of material existence than *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. All material contact for the conditioned souls is removed by the shower of that sweet name and by the revelation of their transcendental identities as servants of God. This extinction of the forest fire of material existence (*bhava mahā davāgni nirvāpanam*) through devotional practice is called *anartha-nivṛtti* (cessation of bad habits) or *kleśaghni* (destruction of misery) in the devotional scriptures. According to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, these are the results of the first stage of devotion named *sādhana-bhakti*, or devotion-in-practice.

3) *śreyaḥ kairava candrikā vitaraṇam*: *Śreyaḥ* means auspicious, *kairava* means “white lotus” and *candrikā* means “moonlight”. *Nāma-saṅkīrtana* is like the

moonlight making the white lotus flower of good fortune blossom. What means *śreyah* or auspiciousness? The Upaniṣads speak about *śreyah* (welfare) and *preyah* (what is to one's liking).

*śreyaś ca preyaś ca manuṣyam etas
tau saparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ
śreya hi dhīro'bhīpreyaso vṛṇīte
preya mando yoga kṣemān vṛṇīte*

“People take shelter either of what is good for them or what is to their own liking. Through discrimination a wise man can understand the difference between them. The wise prefer that which is good for them, and the fools wish to keep that which is to their liking and to acquire that which they lack.”

The *sreyah* we are discussing here is devotion. The *Bhāgavata* (10.14.4) says: *śreyah śṛtīm bhaktim. Śreyah* is that through which a conditioned soul can remember that he is a servant of God. As long as he is absorbed in bodily consciousness with all its good and evil, he must wander through different species of life, having fallen in the inauspicious ditch of material existence. Kṛṣṇa *nāma-saṅkīrtana* destroys that bodily consciousness and is like the moonlight which causes the white lotus flower of auspiciousness to blossom. When the devotee becomes fixed in his practice his heart becomes *maṅgala maṅgalānām*, the white lotus flower of auspiciousness automatically opens in his heart. Therefore in this particular strophe Śrīman Mahāprabhu refers to the stages of *niṣṭhā* (fixation) and *ruci* (deep taste) as they are described in the devotional scriptures. These stages are being experienced as *śubhada*.

4) *vidyā vadhū jīvanam*: It is the very life of the bride called knowledge. What is called *vidyā*? The philosophical books on *saṅkhya* (distinction between matter and spirit) say it is the eightfold mystic *yoga* process, or austerities, but normally it is said to mean “knowledge”. According to the path one treads, that may be knowledge about the nondifferentiated non-personal *brahman* or about the Personality of Godhead. Knowledge about the non-personal *brahman* is devoid of variety and is like an ocean without waves, whereas knowledge about the Personality of Godhead is like an ocean full of waves and full of variety. Knowledge of the non-personal *brahman* is like looking without blinking, without varieties, and knowledge of the Personality of Godhead is like looking with blinking eyes, full of taste and variety. Śrī Kṛṣṇa *nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the life, or the “bride”, of both these kinds of knowledge. Without Śrī Kṛṣṇa *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, the development of knowledge of the non-personal *brahman* is useless, because *bhakti vinā kon sādhana dite nāre phala, sab phala deya bhakti svatantra prabala* (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*) – “Without devotion, no kind of spiritual practice can bear fruit, but devotion itself will grant all fruits. It has independent power.”

Śrīmad Bhāgavata says: *sā vidyā tan matir yayā* – “Vidyā is that which makes one God-conscious”. It is compared here with a bride, because a young bride has a tender nature, she is pleasant, she has a service-attitude and she smiles sweetly. It is

said: “A young bride is like nectar.” In the same way, devotion is also sweeter than sweet. Just as everything is beautiful as long as there is life, and everything comes to naught when there is no life, similarly all devotional practice is lifeless without *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. It is to be understood here that with the help of Śrī Kṛṣṇa *saṅkīrtana*, which is the bride of knowledge or devotion, the transcendental savour of the practitioner increases, and he will advance to the stage of *āsakti* (attachment to God).

5) *ānandāmbudhi vardhanam*: Śrī Kṛṣṇa *nāma-saṅkīrtana* increases the ocean of transcendental bliss. Although day and night many rivers float into the ocean from all directions, the coast is not flooded, but when the full moon rises in the sky the ocean’s high waves inundate the coastline. Similarly, although there may be many things in this world that can give bliss, the devotees’ hearts cannot be agitated by them. However, Śrī Kṛṣṇa *nāma-saṅkīrtana* causes innumerable waves in the ocean of their transcendental ecstasy. Because God is nondifferent from His name, His name also contains all of His infinite sweetness. Although rock-candy is naturally sweet, the tongue of one suffering from jaundice cannot relish it; it tastes bitter to him. Similarly, although the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is naturally filled with unlimited bliss, the tongue which suffers from the disease of *aparādha* (offenses to devotees) cannot experience that bliss. However, because of this one cannot say that there is no bliss in the chanting of *kīrtana*. It is not logical to say that that which cannot be perceived by our fallible senses does not exist. The scientists say that there are stars in the sky whose light have still not reached the earth. Can we therefore say that these stars do not exist? After all, those who look through the telescope say that they do exist! In the same way, the experience of the great souls, who are free from all offenses and contamination and therefore taste the full ecstasy of chanting the holy name, is the only evidence for the existence of that ecstasy.

Śrīmat Jīva Gosvāmī has written: *ataevānanda-rūpatvam asya mahaddhṛdaya sākṣikaṁ yathā śrī vigrahasya* – “The holy name of God is the very form of transcendental bliss, just as the divine form of the Lord is. The best evidence of that is the experience of the *mahātmas*.” The devotees experience: *kṛṣṇa nāme ye ānandasindhu āsvādana, brahmānanda tāra āge khātodaka sama* (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*) – “Compared to the transcendental bliss of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa the bliss of the non-personal *brahman* is just like the water in a moat.” The non-devotee demons could personally see Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of transcendental bliss. Demons like the wrestlers Cānura and Muṣṭika were even tightly embraced by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, but instead of transcendental bliss they only got misery from the encounter. Similarly the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which is full of transcendental flavour, can not be experienced by nondevotees or offensive devotees.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa *nāma-saṅkīrtana* increases the ocean of transcendental bliss, which means the ecstasy of *bhāva*. After the practising devotee reaches the stage of *ruci* (relish), his ecstasy increases even upto the stage of *āsakti* (attachment to Kṛṣṇa). From there he reaches the stage of *bhāva*, which is like a shoreless ocean of bliss.

Thus the holy name acts like the moon of *bhāva*, constantly increasing the ocean of transcendental bliss. In that rarely attained (*sudurlabha*) stage of *bhāva* one considers even the goal of liberation to be insignificant (*moksa laghutakṛt*). This stage of *bhāva* is rarely attained even by performing thousands of different spiritual practices (*sādhana*). Therefore in this part of the *śloka* the two qualities of *mokṣānanda laghutākṛt* and *sudurlabhā*, which are ascribed to the stage of *rati* by the devotional scriptures, are being meant.

6) pratipadam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam: The *kīrtana* of Hare Kṛṣṇa etc. gives one the savour of full nectar at every step, because this nectar has been infused into those names. What to speak of a name, each syllable contains the full nectar! During the Ratha Yātrā-festival at Jagannātha Purī, Mahāprabhu could not pronounce the name of Lord Jagannātha fully, He could only say *jaja gaga jaja gaga* with faltering voice. *Jaja gaga jaja gaga gadgada vacana*. (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*) With “full nectar” the bliss of love for the qualified Personality of Godhead is meant. *Prema* is itself full of nectar and is the cause for relishing the ecstatic divine *rasa*. Just as there is nothing more tasty in this material world than nectar, there is nothing more relishable in the spiritual world than the ecstasy of *prema* and divine *rasa*. Even the bliss of *brahman*, which is the goal of philosophers and mystics, is incomplete, because there is no variety and element of astonishment in it. Ultimately the relishable substance, the relish and the relisher will become one, and thus it is incomplete.

When one performs *kīrtana* after *prema* has arisen, one sees Kṛṣṇa at every step while hearing, chanting and remembering, and one fully relishes the taste of God. The heart which is filled with such love will attract Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*śrī kṛṣṇākaraṣiṇī*) and is full of intense bliss (*sāndrānanda viśeṣātmā*). This, according to Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, is the final stage of devotion called *prema-bhakti*.

7) sarvātma snapanam: When “the whole self is bathed”, one experiences the smell, form, taste, touch and sound of God through completely pure senses, mind and intelligence. Just as the senses, the mind and the intelligence are nourished when the tongue eats foodstuffs, so also all the senses are showered by the *rasa* of transcendental bliss through the performance of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. The tongue is immersed in ecstatic *rasa* by chanting, the ears by hearing it and along with that the mind, intelligence and the self become immersed in an ocean of ecstatic chanting-*rasa*. When one gets this taste, an increasing greed to taste even more *rasa* arises. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in *Vidagdha Mādhava*:

*tuṅḍe tāṅḍavinī ratim vitanute tuṅḍāvalī labdhaye
 kaṛṇa kroḍakadambinī ghaṭayate kaṛṇārbudebhyah sprhām
 cetah prāṅgaṇa saṅginī vijayate sarvendriyānām kṛtim
 no jāne janitā kiyadbhir amṛtaiḥ kṛṣṇeti varṇa-dvayī*

“When one chants, one desires millions of tongues to chant, when the sound of the name even slightly touches the earlobe one desires billions of ears and when the

holy name dances in the courtyard of the heart, all the senses become inert. O! I don't know how much nectar these two syllables *kṛ* and *ṣṇa* contain!"

*ki kohobo nāmera mādhurī
kemon amiyā diyā, ke jāni gaḍilo ihā
kṛṣṇa ei du'ākhara kori*

"How can I describe the sweetness of the holy name? Who has made it, and with what kind of nectar, these two syllables *kṛ-ṣṇa*?" (Yadunandana Ṭhākura)

Since time immemorial the living entity has been wandering around in the desert of repeated birth and death, burning in the scorching heat of the threefold material miseries. Only the nectarean flavour of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa can immerse each atom of his mind, body, heart and senses in paramount transcendental bliss. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī writes:

*ekasminn indriye prādurbhūtaṁ nāmāmṛtaṁ rasaiḥ
āplāvayati sarvāṅīndriyāṇi madhurair nijaiḥ
(Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛtam 2.3.162)*

"The nectar of the holy name is manifest only through the sense of speech, but it inundates all the senses in its own sweet flavour!"

In this way the Śrī Kṛṣṇa *nāma-saṅkīrtana* is always supreme and victorious: *paraṁ vijayate śrī kṛṣṇa saṅkīrtanam*. No matter how degraded or sinful a person may become, the holy name of Kṛṣṇa will be most merciful upon such a fallen soul, bestow all kinds of auspiciousness upon him and bless him with the bliss of loving devotion. Mahāprabhu has summarised this first verse as follows to Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya:

*saṅkīrtana hoite - pāpa saṁsāra nāśana
citta śuddhi sarva bhakti sādhana udgama
kṛṣṇa premodgama, premāmṛta āsvādana
kṛṣṇa prāpti, sevāmṛta samudre majjana*

"The *saṅkīrtana* destroys all sins. It purifies the heart and causes all devotional practices to appear. It causes love of Kṛṣṇa to appear and the devotee relishes the nectar of that love. The devotee then attains Kṛṣṇa and will be immersed in an ocean of nectarean devotional service."

verse 2

*nāmnām ākāri bahudhā nija sarva śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavān mamāpi*

durdaivam īdṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ

nāmnām - of the names; *ākāri* - revealed; *bahudhā* - many ways; *nija* - own; *sarva* - all; *śaktiḥ* - power; *tatra* - there; *arpita* - invested; *niyamitaḥ* - regulations; *smaraṇe* - in remembrance; *na* - not; *kālaḥ* - time; *etādṛśī* - such; *tava* - Your; *kṛpā* - mercy; *bhagavān* - O Lord!; *mama* - mine; *api* - even; *durdaivam* - bad luck; *īdṛśam* - such; *iha* - here; *ajani* - appears; *na* - not; *anurāgaḥ* - attachment.

O Lord! You have given us many names of Yours to chant, investing them with all Your transcendental power, and there are no strict regulations as to when to chant or remember these names. Such is Your mercy, O Lord, but I am so unfortunate that I have no taste for this chanting.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu descended with all devotional mellows and indicated the supremacy of *nāma-sankīrtana* in His first verse. Remembering the sweetness of the name, the Lord, since devotion is by nature never satiating, thought: “How much mercy Kṛṣṇa has placed in His names! But alas! I am deprived of relishing their mellows! I do not have taste for chanting these names!” The Lord’s heart then became filled with humility and sorrow and He spoke this second verse, pretending to be a struggling practitioner, although He is the Supreme Absolute truth Himself. Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī wrote:

*uṭhilo viśāda dainya paḍe āpana śloka
yāra artha śuni sab yāya duḥkha śoka*

“While humility and sorrow appeared in His heart, the Lord spoke this verse. But the sorrow and lamentations of anyone who hears it will go far away!”

This means that one will get love for the chanting of *hari-nāma*, and the misery of material existence will vanish as a mere side-effect. Another meaning of *duḥkha-śoka* is that the misery of and the lamentation over one’s lack of taste for chanting will disappear. After all, this second verse describes both the great mercy of the Lord, as He has invested all His transcendental potencies in His holy name, as well as the fact that there is no love and taste for chanting this holy name. Therefore we have to hear the explanation of this verse with great attention.

According to their nature and backgrounds people have different tastes. *Bhinna rucir hi lokāḥ. Aneka lokera vāñchā aneka prakāra.* (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*) Therefore it is not possible for everyone to have taste or greed for one single name of the Lord. It is natural for the practising devotee to have a particular taste for the name of his favorite, chosen deity (*iṣṭa-deva*), therefore the all-merciful Lord descended in innumerable forms with innumerable names like Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Nṛsimha, Vāmana etc. Apart from the main names, like Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, the Lord also has many other names according to His birth, activities, attributes and pastimes. Some of His names that are related to His birth are for instance Yaśodā-nandana, Nanda Kumāra, Dāsarathi etc. The names that are related with His activities are for

instance Govardhana-dhārī (the lifter of Govardhana Hill), Pūtanā-mokṣana (the redeemer of Pūtanā), Kāmsāri (the enemy of king Kāmsa) and Rāvaṇāri (the enemy of Rāvaṇa). The names that are related to His attributes are for instance Dayāmaya (the all-merciful One) and Bhakta Vatsala (He who is affectionate towards His devotees), and names that are related to His pastimes are Dāmodara (He who was bound with a rope around the belly by His mother), Rāsa Vihārī (the enjoyer of the Rāsa-dance) and so on. Everyone chants that name which he likes the most and thus purifies his heart and is blessed by attaining *prema*, love of God, and the service of the Lord's lotus feet. The greatness of such chanting of one's favorite name is clearly described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* (11.2.40):

*evam vrataḥ sva priya nāma kīrtiyā
jātānurago druta citta uccaiḥ
hasaty atho roditi rauti gāyaty
unmādavan nṛtyati loka bāhyaḥ*

“As the dedicated devotee thus sings the name of His beloved deity, his heart melts as his *anurāga* (sacred passion) appears and he loudly laughs, cries, sings and dances like a madman, not caring for the external world.”

In his *Sārārtha Darśinī*-commentary on this verse, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains that *prema* is infused into the heart of the devotee while he chants the name of his beloved deity and he loses sight of this external world. Because he sees the enchanting transcendental pastimes of the Lord day and night he laughs and cries. During such transcendental revelations the devotee may see that Kṛṣṇa enters some cowherd-woman's house to steal butter. When the old woman spots Him, she cries out: “Catch the butterthief! Catch Him!” and comes running out. When Kṛṣṇa hears her screaming, He becomes afraid and goes off. Such a funny pastime makes the devotee laugh, but when he can not see Kṛṣṇa anymore because He ran off, then he cries. When Kṛṣṇa hears the crying of His beloved devotee then He reveals Himself again, and the devotee sings about His form and qualities and dances in great ecstasy.

In the *rāgānuga-bhajana* of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, hearing, chanting and meditating on the pastimes of the beloved deity are also ascertained as the main limbs of *sādhana*. In his Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta Śrīmat Sanātana Gosvāmī glorifies the chanting of the glories of one's own beloved deity as the most internal limb of *bhajana*:

*taddhi tat tad vraja krīḍā dhyāna gāna pradhānayā
bhaktyā sampadyate preṣṭha nāma saṅkīrtanojjvalam*

“The best means to meditate on Kṛṣṇa's Vraja-*līlā* is the splendid process of devotional *nāma-saṅkīrtana*.”

The question is now that if any devotee can attain *prema* by chanting the holy name of his own favorite deity, then are all the names of the Lord equally glorious? In the scriptures it is seen that the holy name of the Lord is transcendental, as is

the Lord Himself, and all these names are equal in value. Still, when one considers the different glorifications of the holy name, it is seen that the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is the greatest of all.

If the holy name and the holy named are non-different – *abhinnatvāt-nāma-nāminoḥ* – then can there be any doubt that the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, who is the original personality of Godhead is also the original holy name? Śrī Kṛṣṇa personally told Arjuna: *nāmnām mukhyatamaṁ nāma kṛṣṇākhyam me parantapa* – “O Arjuna! My name Kṛṣṇa is the foremost of all the holy names of God!” In the scriptures it is seen that the holy name of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva is superior to the names of Lord Viṣṇu’s descensions such as Kūrma and Matsya, and that the holy name of Śrī Rāmacandra is again superior to that of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva. On the basis of the nondifference between the Lord and His holy name, the Padma Purāṇa declares the holy name of Lord Rāmacandra to be greater than the different other names of Viṣṇu. In the Padma Purāṇa Lord Mahādeva (Śiva) tells Bhagavatī Durgā that the holy name of Viṣṇu is superior to the names of all the demigods, but that the holy name of Rāma is superior even to the 1000 names of Viṣṇu. *Rāmo rāmeti rāmeti rame rāme manorame. Sahasra nāmābhis tulyam rāma nāma varānane*. Again in the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa it is said: *sahasra nāmnām puṇyānām trir āvṛtṭya tu yat phalam; eka vṛtṭyā tu kṛṣṇasya nāmaikam tat prayacchati* – “The pious merit that is attained by reciting the thousand names of Viṣṇu is given by one single recitation of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.” In Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta it is said: *rāma nāma tāraṅga kore mukti-dāna, kṛṣṇa nāma pāraṅga kore prema dāna* – “The holy name of Rāma is the saviour and bestows liberation, and the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is ‘the competent one’ and bestows *prema*.” Kṛṣṇa’s holy name stands supreme, as one great saint has said: *vṛndāvana se vana nahi nandagāo se gāo; vaṁśīvaṭa se baṭa nahi, kṛṣṇanāma se nāma* – “There’s no forest like Vṛndāvana, there’s no village like Nandagrāma, there’s no Banyan-tree like Vaṁśīvaṭa and there’s no name like Kṛṣṇa’s name!” This Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāma is the source of all the names, hence it is said in the first verse: *param vijayate śrī kṛṣṇa saṅkīrtanam!* “Victorious is the supreme glorification of the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa!”

Śrīman Mahāprabhu says: *nija sarva śaktis tatrārpitā* – God has invested all His transcendental power in His names. It is not so that power was not there before and now it is. All that power has always been invested in it, because there is absolutely no difference between the name and then named. Śrīmat Jīva Gosvāmī says that the Lord descends in the form of the syllables of His name (*varṇa-avatāra*): *avatārāntaravat paramesvarasyaiva varṇa rūpeṇāvatāro’yam iti (Bhagavat Sandarbha, 48)*, and Caitanya Caritāmṛta states: *kali kāle nāma rūpe kṛṣṇa avatāra* – “In the age of Kali, Kṛṣṇa descends in the form of His holy name.” So if the name is a direct descension of God, then it must be invested with eternal powers; there is no question of the power being placed in it at some point. Why, then, does Mahāprabhu speak here about *arpaṇa*, investing the power? To make it clear that the name of God is far superior to the names of the conditioned souls.

Śrī Jīva has written: *manogrāhyasya vastuno vyavahārārtham kenāpi sanketitaḥ śabdo nāmeti (Bhagavat Sandarbha, 46)* – “A name is something with which we indicate or want to call some object that is mentally conceivable.” For instance, when we say “water” we indicate some substance with which we can quench our thirst. But as long as we don’t drink the water, we cannot quench our thirst by simply muttering the word “water, water”. There is no object or person in this material world whose name has the attributes of the named, the name is simply an indication of the named. But if anyone thinks that this also counts for God’s holy name, then Mahāprabhu says: *nija sarva śaktis tatrārpita*. The Lord has eternally placed all of His potencies in His name. If water had the same power, then one would be able to quench one’s thirst by chanting “water, water!”. In this world everyone wants to show his own greatness, but nobody and no object has such power as God’s holy name. The Lord has all inconceivable potencies, so He has eternally invested all of His energies in His name. His names are not just sounds indicating something different. Because the Lord is non-different from His name, the name is fully invested with His prowess, His sweetness, His love for His devotees, His compassion and all of His other blessed attributes.

The question is: “It is said that the Lord has invested all His transcendental potencies in His holy name. Is there no disparity at all, then, between the Lord and His name?” Śrīmat Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote in his *Nāmāṣṭakam*:

*vācyam vācakam ity udeti bhavato nāma-svarāpa-dvayam
pūrvasmāt param eva hanta karuṇam tatrāpi jānīmahe
yas tasmin vihitāparādha nivahaḥ prāṇī samantād bhaved
āsyenedam upāsya so’pi hi sadānandāmbudhau majjati*

“O holy name! We know that you have appeared as the transcendental form of Kṛṣṇa (*vācyā*) and as His holy name (*vācaka*), but of the two the holy name is more merciful, for if one offends the Lord one can be delivered from the reaction by loudly calling out His name and thus always be immersed in an ocean of transcendental bliss!” Thus it is shown that the holy name is more merciful than the Lord Himself.

To show the prowess of the Lord’s holy name, the following story is told: Once upon a time the 330 million demigods were quarreling about who was to be worshipped first. Lord Brahmā ordered all the demigods that he or she who could first come to him after having circumambulated the entire universe, was the first one to be worshipped. Hearing this, all the demigods mounted their vehicles. The body of Gaṇeśa is fat and heavy and his vehicle is a mere mouse, so he went along with a morose mind, knowing for sure that he would be the last one to arrive. Luckily he met Nārada Muni, who told him: “O Ṭhākura! Where are you going so quickly today?” Gaṇeśa said: “Devarṣi! Didn’t you hear? Today Brahmā said that the first one who would come to him after circumambulating the universe would be the first one to be worshipped! My body is fat and my vehicle is a mere mouse! I will be the last one to arrive!” Devarṣi Nārada said: “Gaṇeśa Ṭhākura! Do you want

to be worshipped first?” Gaṇeśa said: “Devarṣi! Tell me, who does not want that?” Nārada said: “Then come with me!”, and took Gaṇeśa along to Lord Brahmā. He said: “Go before Lord Brahmā, write the name ‘Kṛṣṇa’ down there and circumambulate these syllables seven times. I will do the rest!” Gaṇeśaji did what Nārada told him to. One by one the demigods were arriving and Brahmā was going to announce to them who was going to be worshipped first. Meanwhile, Nārada came before Lord Brahmā and said: “O Father! You are personally speaking the Vedas, and you know all the scriptures! You know, therefore, that there is no difference between God and His name, and that all of Kṛṣṇa’s prowess is present in His name as well! In front of you, Gaṇeśa has circumambulated the holy name of Kṛṣṇa seven times! Just as the particles of dust are coming in through the open window, so also are innumerable universes emanating from each of the Lord’s skinpores! The other demigods have circumambulated the universe once now, but he (Gaṇeśa) has circumambulated all the innumerable universes seven times before everybody else!” Thus Brahmā accepted that Gaṇeśa was the first demigod to be worshipped. All the Lord’s prowess is so easily and naturally invested in His holy name that any unqualified person can take it.

In the first verse it was already revealed that the Lord’s power of sweetness is revealed through His holy name. The *Skanda Purāṇa* states: *madhura madhuram etan maṅgala maṅgalānām sakala nigama vallī sat phalaṁ cit svarūpam* – “The name of Kṛṣṇa is sweeter than sweet and more auspicious than auspicious. It is the transcendental fruit falling from the vines of the Vedas.” Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī writes: *ekam eva saccid ānanda rasādi rūpaṁ tattvaṁ dvidhāvirbhūtam* – “Although Kṛṣṇa is One, He appears in two delicious transcendental ways: His form and His name.” Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, in *pūrva rāga*-condition (when She falls in love with Kṛṣṇa) relishes the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa’s name as much as the sweetness of His form and the sweetness of His flute-playing. She tells Her girlfriends:

*sajani! maraṇa māniye bahu bhāgi,
kulavatī tina purukhe bhelo ārati-
jīvana kie sukha lāgi*

“O friends! I would be very fortunate if I could die! What happiness can there be for a housewife when She loves three different other men?”

*pahile śunalu ham ‘śyāma dui āṅkhara
toikhoni mana curi kelo
nā jānie ko aiche muralī ālāpai
camakai śruti hari nelo*

“First I heard the two syllable ‘Śyā-ma’ and they stole My mind. I don’t know who plays that flute! Its sound astonishes Me and steals My ears!”

*na jānie ko aiche paṭe daraśāyali -
nava jaladhara jini kāṅti*

*cakita hoiyā ham yāhā yāhā dhāvai
tāhā tāhā rodhaye māti*

“I don’t know whose picture they have shown Me! His lustre shines like a fresh monsooncloud! I am astonished, but wherever I run that picture blocks My way!”

*govinda dāsa kohe śuno sundari,
atae korocho viśoyāsa
yākara nāma muralī-rava tākara,
paṭe bhelo so parakāśa*

Govinda Dāsa says: “Listen, O beautiful girl! Believe me! He whose name and flutesong You have heard and whose picture astonished You, has appeared!”

The holy name reveals its power to purify the sinners. When the great sinner Ajāmila died, he saw the messengers of death coming to arrest him and he cried out to his son in great fear: “Nārāyaṇa! Come!” He did not cry out to God, but to his son Nārāyaṇa. The Lord, who sits in everyone’s heart as the witness, surely knew that he was calling his son, but still, because the syllables of the name were the same, He sent His messengers, the Viṣṇudūtas, and saved the great sinner Ajāmila from the ropes of the messengers of death. In this way, no other form of God clearly saves the sinners as His name-form. The holy name did not only redeem him from bondage, it even sent the Viṣṇudūtas, telling them: “Don’t bring Ajāmila to Vaikuṅṭha yet! After he has heard the glorification of the holy name, he will chant that name with love. He will, then, quickly attain *prema*, and then you may take him to Vaikuṅṭha, because without *prema* My service is unattainable!” Blessed is the mercy of the holy name, the redeemer of the fallen!

Similarly, the holy name also shows how merciful it is to the devotees. King Bharata had to take birth as a deer after meditating on a deer while leaving his body, but by the grace of the holy name he remembered his previous birth and he was overcome by repentance. He decided to not mix with any other deer, and when he gave up his deer-body the merciful holy name automatically came to his tongue. Normally the holy name can only come to a human tongue, not to an animal’s tongue, but this time the holy name mercifully revealed itself. Bharata gave up his deer-body and took birth as a *brāhmaṇa*-saint. All this is written in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu said: *niyamitā smaraṇe na kālaḥ* – “O Lord! You have not set any strict rules about when to hear, chant, or remember Your holy name. Any person can, at any time and in any circumstance, sing Your name!” In his *Hari Bhakti Vilāsa*, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī quotes verses from the *Viṣṇu Dharmottara* and the *Skanda Purāṇa* to prove that there are no hard and fast rules as to when and where to chant the holy name:

*na deśa niyamas tasmin na kāla niyamas tathā
nocchiṣṭādaḥ niṣedho’sti śrī harer nāmni lubdhaka
na deśa kālavasthāsu śuddhyādikam apekṣate*

kintu svatantram evaitan nāma kāmīta kāmādam

“There are no fast rules as to when and where the name is to be chanted. It can be chanted in any contaminated place by any contaminated person. There is no restriction in time, place, circumstance or purity. In all circumstances the holy name fulfills all desires!”

It is also said:

*svapan bhuñjan vrajāms tiṣṭhannutiṣṭhāms ca vadāms tathā
ye vadanti harer nāma tebhyo nityam namo namaḥ*

“I offer my obeisances again and again to those who chant the holy name, even while speaking, eating, sleeping, walking and rising up.”

The revealed scriptures and the saints have set rules for such devotional items as *mantra-japa* (meditating on one’s initiation-*mantra*), *sevā* (deity-worship) etc. One must take a bath and put on clean clothes for that for instance, but the chanting of the holy name is not dependent on such considerations of purity and impurity.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu said: *etādṛsī tava kṛpā bhagavān mamāpi durdaivam īdṛśām ihājani nānurāgaḥ* – “O Lord! Your holy name is so extraordinarily merciful, but my misfortune is so great that I have no attachment for it!” The scriptures and the saints say that only offenses committed to the holy name can dim its greatness. There is no greater misfortune in the world for a practising devotee than this!

*eka kṛṣṇa nāme kore sarva pāpa nāśa
premera kāraṇa bhakti korena prakāśa
premera udaye hoy premera vikāra
sveda kampa pulakādi gadgadāśru dhāra
anāyāse bhava kṣaya kṛṣṇera sevana
eka kṛṣṇa nāmera phale pāi eto dhana
heno kṛṣṇa nāma yadi loy bahubāra
tabu yadi prema nahe, nahe aśrudhāra
tabe jāni aparādha tāhāte pracura
kṛṣṇa nāma bīja tāhe na hoy aṅkura
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā, chapter 8)*

“One utterance of Kṛṣṇa’s name destroys all sins and causes devotion and love of God to appear. When *prema* arises, the devotee shows all its symptoms, such as sweating, shivering, horripilating, a faltering voice and crying streams of tears. Liberation from the material world, which is attained by serving Kṛṣṇa, is easily attained by simply once uttering the name of Kṛṣṇa. When you chant this name of Kṛṣṇa many times, but still you don’t feel love and there are no tears of love streaming from your eyes, then I know that there must be many offenses committed, so that the seed of Kṛṣṇa’s name cannot sprout.”

One may ask here: If the glories of the holy name are so unhindered, then why is there still consideration of offenses? If offenses dim the greatness of the name, then

how can the holy name be called unrestricted? The answer is that mist cannot cover the sun, it can only cover the sun from our eyes. Because mist may cover the sun, the sunrays cannot fall on us. Similarly, nothing can actually cover the self-manifest greatness of the holy name, but offenses cover our hearts in such a way that its powers cannot fall into our hearts. But when the mist dissolves, the sunrays can fall on us unhindered. Similarly, when offenses disappear, the strength of the holy name is freely experienced in the heart. It is just like a king, who is able at any time to make any poor man rich. But if the king is displeased with someone, and he does not want to give his wealth to him, it does not mean that he is not able to give that wealth! In the same way, the holy name is able to give *prema* to the offensive chanter, but he will not give it because he simply does not want to give it. That is why the practising devotee should chant the holy name without committing offenses. Even if one chants for a long time, *prema* will not come in the heart as long as one commits offenses. That is why the devotional scriptures are always warning the practising devotees to beware of offenses.

When we investigate the root cause of offenses, then we can see that it is an envious mood that stops love from entering our hearts. This envy finds its cause in false egotism, and as a result a low person may consider himself to be the greatest, the ignorant may think themselves to be very learned, and one is unable to see one's own fault and another person's qualities. Thus one praises oneself and criticises others. In this way offensive persons are envious of another person's success and cannot tolerate the greatness of another Vaiṣṇava, although he can clearly recognise that greatness. They may even consider the guru, who is the very form of God's great mercy (*kāruṇya ghaṇa vighraha*) to be an ordinary human being and they cannot have faith in the glorification of the holy name, even if they have clearly heard it. False words, violent behaviour and sinful acts like theft and so will create great offenses in the heart of such an envious and deceitful person. In the Padma Purāṇa ten offenses to the holy name are written down and we will briefly describe them below:

1) *sādhu nindā* (blaspheming the saint): Blaspheming the saint is a grave offense, and is called *mahad aparādha*. A *sādhu* is a devotee of God through whose preaching the holy name has become world famous. How can the holy name tolerate blasphemy of such a person? Many people think that there is no harm in discussing the fault of some devotee who is engaged in some wicked activities, because that criticism is true and justified, but Śrīpada Śrīdhara Svāmī writes in his commentary on *Śrīmad Bhāgavata: nindanam doṣa kīrtanam* – “There is no question whether the devotee who is under discussion is at fault or not, speaking bad about such a person is called blasphemy.” It is natural that we wonder: “Who are these devotees, offending whom we commit an offense to the holy name?” In his book *Mādhurya Kādambinī*, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī gives the answer: “It is not proper to think that only those devotees who are merciful, nonviolent, tolerant etc. are to be considered saints, and that those who are not endowed with such qualities are not saints, and that one can thus blaspheme them without committing

an offense to the holy name. Actually, anyone who worships God, be he deceitful, ill-behaved, hypocritical and unclean, is a saint, and to blaspheme or criticise such a person is an offense to the holy name. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself says in *Bhagavad Gītā* (9.30):

*api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananya bhāk
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ*

“Even if one commits the most abominable activities, he is to be considered a saint when he exclusively worships Me, for he is on the right path.” Those who have fixed the thought in their mind, “I will be blessed by worshipping the Supreme Lord”, and who do not worship demigods, but only the Supreme Lord, are saints, even if they misbehave, and to criticise even them is an offense to the holy name.

2) to think that śrī viṣṇu and śrī śiva are independent truths: Those who think that the qualities and names and so of Śrī Viṣṇu are separate from those of Śrī Śiva are offenders to the holy name (*śrī viṣṇoḥ śivasya tad guṇa nāmādi sakala dhiyaḥ bhinnam paśyeta sa khalu hari nāmāhitakaraḥ*). In other words, to become a *bahvīśvara vādī*, one who thinks that there are many Gods, that Lord Śiva has separate powers from Lord Viṣṇu, and vice versa, is an offense to the holy name. The Vaiṣṇavas think of Lord Śiva as the servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Controller.

3) to disrespect the guru: To consider Śrī Guru to be an ordinary human being is an offense, for he is the Lord’s *kāruṇya ghana vighraha*, the personification of His great mercy. Just as ice is the result of cooling off liquid water, so the Lord’s mercy becomes substantial and descends to earth in the form of the *guru* to redeem the fallen souls. This is how the proper disciple looks at his *guru*. The disciple always thinks of the transcendental attributes of his *guru*, he never looks at the external or titular shortcomings in his divine form, for that would make him seem human and then the holy name will not be pleased with such a chanter.

4) to blaspheme the śruti-scriptures: The *śruti*-scriptures are super-human. It is said *vedayatīti vedah*: The Vedas explain themselves. Vedic scriptures like *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* are also self-manifest. The *Purāṇas* and history-books are full with clear explanations of the Vedas, so they are also on Vedic level. It is an offense to the holy name to blaspheme such scriptures. Those scriptures which preach *jñāna* (intellectual spiritual realisation) and *karma* (work) are also most merciful, for they engage those people who are not ready yet for the path of devotion, being still too attached to *jñāna* and *karma*. These scriptures gradually bring such souls into the temple of devotion, so one certainly commits an offense to the holy name by blaspheming such scriptures.

5) to consider the glorification of the holy name to be exaggerated: This glorification is done by the revealed scriptures and self-realized souls and one should not think that their statements are exaggerated. As a matter of fact, their glorifications are only a drop of the shoreless ocean of the holy name’s glories! Even the thousand-headed Lord Ananta can never find the end to its glories, so one

should never think: “Those glorifications are only made to create faith in the minds of the practising devotees.” The holy name is self-manifest and self-perfect and is not dependent on any ritual or glorification. Therefore there is no question of any exaggeration in the glorification of the holy name.

6) to consider the glories of the holy name to be imaginary: To minimize the glorifications of the holy name in scriptures such as *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* is another great offense to Vaiṣṇavism. It is not good to be an unbeliever or atheist, by arguing and counter-arguing, thinking: “I don’t accept the existence of what I cannot understand.” Our brains are never able to grasp the truth about transcendental matters, therefore it is not good to argue about them or to disbelieve them. When our intelligence becomes spiritualised beyond the three modes of the material psyche, then one will be able to grasp transcendental truth. In this material world we can experience the wonderful powers of *mantras*, herbs, stones and so on, and we can also not ascertain these powers simply by arguing about them. If we cannot even argue about material powers, what then to speak of spiritual powers? Therefore, one should not argue about spiritual things, as they are inconceivable to material brains:

*acintyāḥ khalu ye bhāva na taṁs tarkeṇa yojayet
prakṛtibhyaḥ param yac ca tad acintyasya lakṣaṇam*

7) to commit sinful activities on the strength of chanting the holy name – In the scriptures we can read that all sins are destroyed by chanting the holy name. Even the greatest sins are burned by the holy name as a heap of cotton is burned to ashes by fire. But if one willingly sins, thinking that these sins will be destroyed on the strength of the holy name, one commits a terrible offense to the holy name. It is only the greatest rascal who would commit disgusting sins on the strength of that holy name, which can easily give us the greatest blessings of human life, love of God and ecstatic devotional service. The reactions to sins committed in that consciousness will count millions of times heavier than normal. Even many rituals of atonement or a long term punishment by Yamarāja, the god of death and punishment after death, cannot purify one from such sins.

8) to consider the holy name to be equal to other auspicious activities – It is a terrible offense to the holy name to consider it to be equal to pious acts such as *dharma* (following religious principles), *vrata* (keeping vows), *tyāga* (renunciation) *homa* (fire sacrifices) and so on. Thus one tries to limit the glories of the holy name and this is counted as an offense.

9) to advise a faithless person to chant the holy name – It is an offense to instruct an unwilling person, for that person will react in a disrespectful way and that is an offense on the part of the preacher.

10) not to love the holy name, even after hearing its glorification – A practising devotee who gives no attention to the holy name, who is intoxicated by sense-enjoyment and is filled with bodily feelings of “I” and “mine”, is an offender to the holy name.

The primary result of the chanting of the holy name is love for the Lord's lotus feet. Destruction of sinful reactions and liberation from material existence are secondary results. The only reservation is offense. If one avoids the aforementioned offenses one can become freed from the "bad luck" of having no taste and be blessed with *prema*, love of God. In this connection the *Padma Purāṇa* says:

*nāmāparādha yuktānām nāmāny eva haranty agham
aviśrānta prayuktāni tāny evārtha karāṇi hi*

"One who untiringly chants the holy name can become freed from all the offenses to the chanting."

When one has consciously offended a great soul, one can be forgiven by falling at his feet and begging forgiveness. But the results of the offense will not leave the person who thinks: "Why should I apologise personally? Let me just constantly chant to become free from my offenses!" Then that offense to the saint will not be forgiven by the Lord. Rather, the offense will weigh even heavier on the offender! Also, when one commits *sevā-aparādha* unknowingly, these offenses can be eradicated by chanting *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. But when one purposefully commits such offenses, thinking they will be forgiven by chanting the holy name, that is another terrible offense to the holy name. Other than that, all offenses, committed knowingly or unknowingly, are forgiven if one constantly chants *nāma-saṅkīrtana* with repentance.

One should chant *harināma* with love and repentance, having firm faith that "If I take shelter of Bhakti-devī, my offenses will certainly cease and as a result of my *saṅkīrtana* I will surely attain devotion!" Faith is absolutely required if one wants to give up committing offenses, and that faith can be attained by those in whose heart repentance and eagerness arises. How can a person become freed from offenses if he is not repenting from the beginning? For the sake of destroying offenses one repents, and if the offenses do not cease, then one anxiously takes shelter of the holy name. Certainly the holy name will become pleased with such a chanter and bless him with the treasure of *prema*.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu teaches all the practising devotees of the world how to chant the holy name with attachment by pretending that He Himself has no attachment to it, although He is love of the holy name personified. The chanting of the practising devotee should be full of such attachment. The holy name contains the full savour of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's form, qualities and sweetness, but an offender cannot experience any of it, therefore he can also not chant with eagerness and attachment. The name is coming out of his mouth mechanically while his contaminated mind freely wanders through the forest of the sense-objects. So, while he has a beadbag in his hand and he is chanting his prescribed number of rounds, he speaks on different local and foreign subjects, about sense-objects, and even about other devotees' faults and shortcomings. Actually "*bhaktipathe podoye vigati*", "a disaster happens on the path of devotion". If *sugati* (auspiciousness) is not there, there will be *vigati* (calamity) and *durdaiva* (bad luck). But a person who

offenselessly chants the holy name in the company of saints, aiming at the savour of the nectar of the holy name, will easily be blessed with loving attachment to the life of *bhajana*. Śrīman Mahāprabhu personally gave the following summary of this verse:

*aneka lokera vāñchā aneka prakāra
kṛpāte korilo aneka nāmera pracāra.
khāite suite yathā tathā nāma loy
deśa kāla niyama nahi, sarva siddhi hoy
sarva śakti nāme dilā koriyā vibhāga
āmāra durdaiva nāme nāhi anurāga*

“Many people have many different desires and You are so kind that You have revealed many different names. One can chant the holy name while eating or while lying down, there is no restriction in time and place. It always grants perfection. You have invested all Your powers in Your holy names, but I am so unfortunate that I have no attachment to them.”

verse 3

*tṛṇād api sunīcena taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

tṛṇād - than a blade of grass; *api* - even; *sunīcena* - being low; *taror* - as a tree; *iva* - just as; *sahiṣṇunā* - being tolerant; *amāninā* - not being proud; *mānadena* - by giving honour; *kīrtanīyaḥ* - to be chanted; *sadā* - always; *hariḥ* - Hari.

The holy name of Lord Hari should always be chanted in great humility. One should think oneself to be lower than a blade of grass, one should be as tolerant as a tree, one must offer all honour to others and one should never expect any honour for oneself.

Before revealing this third verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭakam*, Śrīman Mahāprabhu, the descension who purifies the age of quarrel (*kaliyuga pāvanāvatāra*), told Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmā-nanda Rāya:

*ye rūpe loile nāma prema upajāya
tāhāra lakṣaṇa śuno svarūpa rāma rāya*

“O Svarūpa and Rāma Rāya! Listen to the means by which the holy name can awaken *prema*!”

The holy name of Lord Hari should always be chanted in great humility. One should think oneself to be lower than a blade of grass, one should be as tolerant as

a tree, one must offer all honour to others and one should never expect any honour for oneself. At the end of the *Ādi-līlā* of *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī writes the following verse:

*ūrdhva bāhu kori śuno sarva loka
nāma sūtre gān̄thi poro kaṅṭhe ei śloka*

“Raise your arms, all you people, and listen: string this verse on a thread and wear it around your neck!”

When a speaker wants to reach people who are far away from him he speaks out loud with raised hands, so that everyone will notice him and pay attention. In this way Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī says to all chanters that they should wear this verse around a neck just like one’s neckbeads. If one does not follow this formula, it will be difficult to attain the results of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*.

In the previous verse it was discussed that there is nothing else but offenses that prevents the full power of the holy name to manifest itself. Here Śrīman Mahāprabhu teaches all the people of the world that the only way to protect oneself from offenses is to chant the holy name with great humility. When He instructed Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīman Mahāprabhu compared offenses committed against the devotees to a mad elephant which uproots the tender vine of one’s devotion from the heart. There is no other way than to fence off one’s vine-of-devotion with the shield of humility:

*yadi vaiṣṇava aparādha uṭhe hāthī mātā
upāḍe vā chiṅḍe tāra śuki yāy pātā
tāte mālī yatna kori kore āvaraṇa
aparādha hastī yaiche nā hoy udgama
(Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta)*

It is also said:

*dīnatā māna dattādi śila kṛpta mahāvṛtiḥ
bhakti kalpa nṛbhiḥ pālyā śravaṇādyāmbu secanaiḥ*

“One should build a strong wall of humility and protect one’s vine of devotion by giving honour to others around it, sprinkling the vine with the water of hearing and chanting.”

“Humility” means to naturally always consider oneself to be very unqualified. Śrīmat Sanātana Gosvāmī defined humility as follows in his *Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta*:

*yenāsādharaṇāśaktādhama buddhiḥ sadātmani
sarvotkarṣāṅvite’pi syād budhais tad dainyam iṣyate
yayā vācehayā dainyam matyā ca sthairyam eti tat
tām yatnena bhajed vidvāms tad viruddhāni varjayet*

“The wise men call humility that feeling which makes the most qualified person consider oneself to be low and unqualified. Intelligent practising devotees should

follow with their words, activities and intelligence in the footsteps of those in whose hearts this humility is fixed, and they should never act contrary to this.”

The abovementioned humility, which makes the most qualified person consider oneself to be low and unworthy, is not ordinary humility. It is the natural condition of a surrendered soul who has illuminated his spiritual self by returning to his constitutional position. When a fortunate person, who has surrendered to the Lord's lotus feet by the mercy of a bonafide teacher, advances on the path of devotion, he will experience the authority of God more and more as the dense darkness of his false bodily consciousness vanishes and his real identification as God's servant awakens. The practising devotee will ultimately give up all his own false authority, throwing it into the ocean of God's authority by means of full surrender to the Lord's feet, and thus becoming a liberated soul. As long as he is in his material body he will have to deal and speak with people of the world, but as soon as he senses even the slightest feeling of personal authority coming up in him, he feels greatly upset. An urge of humility will arise in his heart and he will at once give up his false feeling of authority. That is the natural humility of a devotee, and the valuable treasure of a devotee's *sādhana* (spiritual practice). Śrīmat Sanātana Gosvāmī says that there is not much difference between humility and devotion. Both are impetuses for each other.

The holy name will be pleased with such humility of the devotee and in this way all offenses to the Vaiṣṇavas will vanish. Thus humility attracts the mercy of the holy name. Our eyes are very tender, yet they are the most important of the knowledge-acquiring senses, and because even the slightest thing can cause great damage to them, the Lord has created our eyelids to always protect them. If, by chance, a speck of dust falls on the eye, the fine nerves in the eye immediately produce water to drive the dust out of the eye's realm. In the same way, humility drives out the offenses that hamper our devotion and make our hearts free from them. With this verse *ṭṛṇād api sunīcena*, Śrīman Mahāprabhu teaches the practising devotees how to observe the limit of humility. Humility is the very life-force of the chanting of the holy name. Chanting without humility is lifeless, therefore the chanter must become specifically acquainted with these great words of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.

The Lord said: *ṭṛṇād api sunīcena* – “The practising devotee should feel as humble as a blade of grass.” A blade of grass is a very insignificant thing, but it is still very important since it serves the cows as foodstuff and through that the cows give milk with which the Lord can be served. Roofs of houses and temples can also be made with grass. “But”, the devotee should think, “no service has ever been done through me.” In this way he considers himself to be even lower than a blade of grass. The devotee should humbly think: “When someone steps on a blade of grass, the grass will rise again after the foot has gone off him, but I never get up so unharmed and unoffended if someone kicks me with the foot.” Certainly these feelings of humility must be developed by the practising devotee. As long as one does not realize one's lowness with one's heart and mind, and only feigns humility

on the outside, verbally for instance, the perfection of this *tṛṇād api sunīcena*-mood is not attained. Real humility is mental humility. There is no greater deceit than to feign humility through one's gestures and words and being actually filled with false pride within one's mind. Such false humility will never purify anyone's heart.

Then *taror iva sahiṣṇuṇā* – The devotee should be as tolerant as a tree. Even when the tree is cut down, he will not say anything, but will silently tolerate it. He will not consider the cutter to be his enemy, but will even serve him by shading him and offering him his fruits. *Chettuḥ pārśvagatām chāyām nopasamharate drumah*. That is an example of the limit of humility. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* mentions the story of the *brāhmaṇa*-mendicant from Avantīpura, and in *Caitanya Bhāgavata* it is described how Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura tolerated the beatings of the Muslims in twenty-two market places. When the Muslims tried to beat him to death, Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura prayed to the Lord for their welfare:

*e sab jīvere kṛṣṇa koroḥo prasāda
mora drohe nahu e sabhāra aparādha*

“O Kṛṣṇa! Be merciful upon all these people, so that they will not offend You by torturing me like this!”

Even if a tree dries up and dies because nobody sprinkles him with water, he will not ask anyone for water. Rather, he will serve everyone with his fruits, wood, leaves and resin. The tree patiently tolerates the scorching sunrays in the summer, the pouring rain in the monsoon-time and the freezing cold in the winter. In the same way, the devotees should practise tolerance similar to that of the tree, serving even those who harrass, hurt and insult them without being angry with anyone. The devotee never asks anything from anyone, but rather donates whatever he can give to others, patiently tolerating all the pain they may give to him.

Amāninā mānadena – The devotee never expects any honour from anyone but he honours all other living entities at all times, knowing that his beloved Lord dwells in all of them. There is no-one in the world that he should disrespect. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* states:

*antar deheṣu bhūtānām ātmas te harir īśvaraḥ
sarvaṁ taddhiṣṇyam ikṣadhvam eva vas toṣito hy asau*

“Lord Hari dwells in the hearts of all living beings as their Supreme Self, and as they are His dwelling place, they should also be satisfied.”

Each body is the temple of Hari, because He dwells in everyone, therefore everyone is respectable for a devotee. The temple may be broken, misformed, uncultured or dirty, but it is still worshipable for the devotee. In the same way, according to worldly view some people are low or unimportant, but they are still respectable for the devotee. Therefore *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* (11.29.16) states: *praṇamed daṇḍavad bhūmāv aśva caṇḍāla go kharam* – “One should offer prostrated obeisances even to the horses, the outcastes, the cows and the donkeys, knowing that the Supreme Self dwells in them.” *Brāhmaṇādi caṇḍāla kukkura anta kori*,

daṇḍavat koribek bahu mānya dhari (Caitanya Bhāgavata) – “One should offer prostrated obeisances to the *brāhmaṇas*, the outcastes and the dogs, giving them great honour.” In such a humble state a devotee should always do *hari kīrtana*. Such chanting will destroy all offenses committed in this life and in previous lives and will swiftly bless the devotee with the treasure of *prema*. *kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*.

One may ask here: “Is it possible for any neophyte to be lower than a blade of grass and more tolerant as a tree? Why did Mahāprabhu mention such a difficult condition, whereas His path of devotion is supposed to be so easily practised?” Certainly such a critical question may be asked, but we must consider that the goal of the path of devotion is only attainable by mercy. When the neophyte anxiously takes shelter of the holy name, in order to chant without offenses, then he will become qualified in all respects, simply by the grace of the holy name.

In this regard we have heard a true story from our most worshipable Śrī Gurudeva, which occurred in Vraja. We could not control the desire to write that story down here on this occasion. Long ago one highly educated person came from Bengal to Vṛndāvana, desiring to live in Vraja and to receive instructions and initiation from a genuine Guru. He used to come regularly to a famous *bhajanānandī mahātma*, (a great saint who loves to worship God) who understood from speaking with him that the aspirant was inwardly proud of his learning. Although the aspirant had asked him for initiation and instruction, the *mahātma* did not lend an ear to the request. One day, when the aspirant came to him blubbering about initiation, the *mahātma* told him that he could get initiated if he brought him within seven days a person or an object that was in all respects inferior to him (the aspirant).

At first the aspirant thought: “O, what’s so difficult about that? Almost everyone in this world is inferior to me! I can bring anyone along with me to my *guru*!” But by the grace of that *mahātma* the aspirant became more and more aware of his own faults and others’ qualities. After all, all of Lord Brahmā’s creatures are a mixture of qualities and faults! Thinking like this, the aspirant could not find any human being inferior to himself. Then he began to look for an inferior being within the animal- and bird-world, but there also he was unsuccessful, because each animal and bird has some qualities which even human beings don’t have! Finally he searched amongst the trees and vines, but there he was also unsuccessful, because Mahāprabhu had instructed the Vaiṣṇavas to be as tolerant as a tree (so trees were definitely superior to him). In this way he spent six days searching. There was only one day left, and if he could not find anyone inferior to him today, then he would not get initiated. In the morning of the seventh day, the aspirant went out into the field to pass stool with a very agitated mind. It was, after all, his initiation-day. While he was passing stool, he thought: “Aw, this stool is inferior to me in all respects! Let me tell that to my Guru!” But by the grace of his teacher his intelligence had become so much trained in seeing others’ qualities and his own faults that he began to think: “Brother, just see! You say that this stool is inferior to you, but before this substance came in contact with you, it was divine *prasāda*

offered to the deity. Now, because you wanted to stay alive and you wanted to feed your body, it has become such a disgusting substance! Is there anybody lower than he who gives himself such a nice substance for feeding his own body and turns it into something so bad?” Thinking like this, the aspirant became startled and thought to himself: “No, no! This substance is also much better than me!” Meanwhile a worm crawled into the stool and the aspirant thought: “Now I have it! This worm in the stool is inferior to me in every respect!” But then he began to think about the worm, saying to himself: “Brother! You have turned the Lord’s *prasāda* into this stool and you cannot make it pure anymore, but this worm will ultimately make this stool merge with the earth again, and even that you cannot do! In that respect you are inferior!”

Although Śrīla Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī is praiseworthy by the whole world, when he described the mercy of Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, he said:

*jagāi mādhai hoite mui se pāpiṣṭha
purīṣera kīṭa hoite mui se laghiṣṭha
mora nāma śune yei, tara puṇya-kṣaya
mora nāma loy yei, tāra pāpa hoy
emon nirghṛṇa more kebā kṛpā kore
eka nityānanda vinu jagata bhitorē?*

“I am more sinful than Jagāi and Mādhai and i am lower than a worm in stool. Anyone who hears my name loses his pious merit and anyone who pronounces my name commits a sin. Which non-envious person in the world other than Lord Nityānanda would bestow mercy on such a disgusting person?”

How can such a person, who is praised by the whole world, experience that he is inferior to a worm in stool? And if he only spoke humble words, and was not really humble within his heart, wouldn’t that be the greatest deceit? Therefore, this experience can only come to a great saint or to a fortunate soul who has received the mercy of a great soul. This can never be experienced by anyone else.

Anyway, the aspirant finished his bath and went to his master. The master asked him: “And, did you bring that which is inferior to you in all respects?” The aspirant offered his prostrated obeisances and said: “O master! By your mercy I have seen within these seven days that if there is any thoroughly low creature or substance in this world, then it is me! There is no lower creature in the whole world than me!” The *mahātma* laughed and embraced the candidate, saying: “You have brought yourself here after giving up your pride and accepting a humble mood. Now there is no more obstacle to your initiation!” By the mercy of that saint, the aspirant was then blessed with a life full of tasteful *bhajana*. Śrīman Mahāprabhu Himself explained this verse as follows:

*uttama hoiyā āpanāke māne tṛṇādhamā
dui prakāre sahiṣṇuta kore vṛkṣa sama*

*vṛkṣa yeno kāt-leo kichu nā boloy
śukhāiyā moile kāre pāni nā māgoy
yei ye māgoye tāre deya āpana dhana
gharma vṛṣṭi sohe, ānere koroye rakṣaṇa
uttama hoiyā vaiṣṇava hobe nirabhimāna
jīve sammāna dibe jāni kṛṣṇa adhiṣṭhāna
ei mata hoiyā yei kṛṣṇa nāma loy
śrī kṛṣṇa caraṇe tara prema upajoy*

“Although the devotee is the most elevated person, he considers himself to be lower than a blade of grass, and he tolerates everything in two ways, just like a tree. Even when a tree is cut, he does not say anything, and even when he dries up and dies, he does not ask anyone for water. Nevertheless, he gives his own wealth for free to anyone who may ask for it, protecting others while tolerating heat and rain. Although the Vaiṣṇava is the greatest personality, he is devoid of pride and he honours all living beings, knowing that Kṛṣṇa dwells in them. Whoever chants the name of Kṛṣṇa in this way will attain love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.”

verse 4

*na dhanam na janam na sundarim
kavitam va jagadisa kamaye
mama janmani janmanisvare
bhavatad bhaktir ahaituki tvayi*

na - no; *dhanam* - wealth; *na* - no; *janam* - followers, or company; *na* - no; *sundarim* - beautiful woman; *kavitam* - poetry; *va* - or; *jagadisa* - Lord of the universe; *kamaye* - desire; *mama* - my; *janmani* - birth; *janmani* - birth; *isvare* - in the Lord; *bhavatad* - Your; *bhaktiḥ* - devotion; *ahaituki* - causeless; *tvayi* - in You.

O Lord of the universe! I do not want wealth, followers or vain companions, a beautiful woman or the enjoyment of beautiful poetry! All I want is causeless devotion unto You, birth after birth!

Śrīla Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Kavirāja describes how the Lord spoke this fourth verse:

*kohite kohite prabhura dainya bādhilā
śuddha bhakti kṛṣṇa thāi māgite lāgilā
premera svabhāva - yāhā premera sambandha
se-i māne kṛṣṇe mora nāhi prema gandha*

“While the Lord spoke, His humility increased and He began to pray to Kṛṣṇa for pure devotion. It is the nature of *prema* that whoever has a loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa thinks: ‘I don’t have even a whiff of love for Kṛṣṇa!’”

When the Lord spoke the verse “*tṛṇād api sunīcena*” the ocean of His humility swelled. Because He is the ocean of love He is also the ocean of humility. It is said that there is no difference between humility and love:

*dāinyas tu paramaṁ premnaḥ paripākena janyate
tāsāṁ gokula nārīnām iva kṛṣṇa viyogataḥ
(Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta)*

“When *prema* ripens, humility appears along with it. When the girls of Gokula were separated from Kṛṣṇa (after He left Vṛndāvana for Mathurā), they showed the limit of humility.”

The topmost humility dwells in the crownjewel of all the Vraja-*gopīs*, Śrī Rādhārāṇī. In His final twelve years at Purī, Śrīman Mahāprabhu relished the humility and the divine madness of Śrī Rādhā. During that time He revealed the Śikṣāṣṭakam. There is no limit to the hundreds of waves of humility in the ocean of Rādhā-*prema* that the Lord experienced. When the waves of humility came up in His heart, He asked the Lord for pure devotion.

One may ask here: If Mahāprabhu is the ocean of divine love, then why does He still pray for pure devotion? The answer is given here: *premera svabhāva – yāhā premera sambandha, se-i māne kṛṣṇe mora nāhi prema gandha* – “It is the nature of *prema* that the lover thinks: I don’t have even a whiff of love for Kṛṣṇa!” Real devotion means that one is never satiated. One can measure one’s thirst from one’s relish for the *rasa* of *bhajana*. *Prema* always keeps the heart of the lover (*premiḥ*) agitated with a deep thirst for *prema*. The more one tastes, the more one thirsts and the more one thirsts, the more one tastes. In this world hunger and food diminish each other, but in the kingdom of love of God it is exactly the opposite. There the taste of Kṛṣṇa’s sweetness increases the thirst for *prema* and vice versa.

*kṣudhā āra khādyavastu ubhaye yemon
ubhaye ubhayera hoy vināśa kāraṇa
prema rājye ei rīti ati vilakṣaṇa
ubhaye ubhayera hoy vardhana kāraṇa*

In *Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta* (1.7.135) Nārada Muni prays for this boon from Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

*śrī kṛṣṇacandra kasyāpi tṛptir astu kadāpi na
bhavato’nugraho bhaktau premni cānanda bhājane*

“O Kṛṣṇacandra! You are transcendental bliss personified! May no one ever be satiated with love and devotion for You. This is the boon I pray for!”

Hearing this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said:

*vidagdha nikarācārya ko nāmāyaṁ varo mataḥ
svabhāvo mat kṛpā bhakti premṇām vyakto’yam eva yat*

“O teacher of all clever arts! What kind of a boon is it that you want? Everyone knows that My mercy, devotion and love are inexhaustible!”

The more the devotee advances in his love, the more he laments out of thirst for more. Although Mahāprabhu is the ocean of love, He told Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya: *śuno mora prāṇera bāndhava! nāhi kṛṣṇa prema dhana, daridra mora jīvana, dehendriya vṛthā mora sab* – “Listen, O My heart’s friends! I don’t have the treasure of love of Kṛṣṇa, so My life is poverty-stricken and My body and senses are all useless!”

When someone says: “O Lord! You are the incarnation of love, and Your divine body is full of ecstatic symptoms like goosepimples and tears of love! How can I believe You when You say that You have no *prema*?” Then the answer is: *tabe ye kori krandana, sva saubhāgya prakhyāpana, kori iha jāniho niścoy* (Caitanya *Caritāmṛta*) – “Know for sure that I’m just announcing My own good fortune when I cry!” In other words, when I cry, that is not because of My great devotion, but it is only to show how fortunate I am to have so much devotion!” That is the wonderful nature of sacred devotional thirst, and that is why the ocean of *prema* is agitated by humility. The Lord humbly prays like an inexperienced neophyte: *na dhanam na janam na sundarim kavitam va jagadisa kamaye* – “O Lord of the universe! I don’t want wealth, followers or a beautiful wife, nor do I want to be a great poet!”

Since beginningless time the living entities are forgetful of Śrī Govinda’s lotus feet. Being deluded by *māyā*, they are wandering from one species of life to the other, attached to selfish activities and desiring wealth, followers and so on. Even those who have attained the rare human body and have even attained the path of devotion to God by the mercy of a saint, may still beg for wealth and followers from the Lord. A person who nourishes such contrary desires will be deprived of *prema*, even if he is doing *bhajana*.

*bhukti mukti siddhi vāñchā mone yadi roy
sādhana korle-o prema utpanna nā hoy
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta)*

“When there are desires for enjoyment, salvation or mystic perfection in the devotee’s mind, he will not attain *prema*, even if he practises *sādhana*.”

The Gopāla Tāpanī Upaniṣad states: *bhaktir asya bhajanam tad ihā-mutropādhi nairāsyena amusmin manah kalpanam etad eva hi naiṣkarmyam* – “The path of devotion consists of intense meditation on God and makes the mind free from all personal desires for fruitive activities.” *Bhajana* has the same object here as *naiṣkarmya* (selfless action). In other words, in the mind of the devotee there will be no other desire but the service of the Lord. When the mind is free from the material modes it becomes absorbed in the taste of the Lord’s service. The *Nārada Pañcarātra* gives the following definition of pure devotion:

*sarvopādhi vinirmuktaṁ tat paratvena nirmalam
hṛṣikena hṛṣikeṣa sevanaṁ bhaktir ucyate*

“Devotion means to engage one’s senses in the service of the Lord of the senses. By such surrender one becomes purified and free from all designations and personal motives.”

Based on these statements from *śruti* and *smṛti*, Śrīmat Rūpa Gosvāmī has given the following complete definition of pure devotion in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

*anyābhilāṣita śūnyam jñāna karmādy anāvṛtam
anukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam bhaktir uttamā*

“The highest form of devotion is devoid of all other desires (but devotion), is not covered by endeavours for fruitive results or empirical knowledge and is favorable to Kṛṣṇa (or any of the other descents of the Lord).”

In the positive sense, *anuśīlana* means serving the deity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with one’s body, singing His names, His glories and His pastimes with one’s words and always lovingly thinking of Him with one’s mind. In the negative sense it means that one tries to avoid the offenses to His name and His deity-form.

Anukūla means that one must be favorably disposed towards Kṛṣṇa. Others, like the kings Kāmsa and Śiśupāla, were not favorable to Kṛṣṇa, so their dealings with Him cannot be counted as devotion. One must deal with Kṛṣṇa with the purpose of giving Him pleasure. The demons gave Kṛṣṇa a lot of fighting-pleasure by attacking Him with their weapons, but this can still not be counted as devotion because they did not fight with Him for that purpose. They hated Him, and this is not a *bhakti-rasa*. On the other hand, when mother Yaśodā left Kṛṣṇa, who was sucking her breast, to save the milk from boiling over, it did not make Kṛṣṇa happy, rather He got angry with her. Still this is counted as devotion because mother Yaśodā’s attitude towards Kṛṣṇa was favorable. This is called *anukūlyena*.

Devotion can be *sopādhika*, motivated, or *nirupādhika*, unmotivated. There are again two kinds of motivated devotion: devotion with ulterior motives and devotion mixed with other desires. Ulterior motives means desires for sense enjoyment and liberation, and a mixture with other desires means devotion covered over by endeavours for knowledge and renunciation. Pure devotion means engagement in hearing, chanting, and remembering the Lord’s names, qualities and pastimes without any ulterior motives or a mixture with other desires. This pure devotion also goes under the names of *uttamā*, *nirguṇā*, *kevalā*, *mukhyā*, *ananyā*, *akiñcanā* and *svarūpa siddhā*. Pure devotees do not desire anything else but the Lord’s devotional service. When Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva was pleased with Prahlāda’s prayers, He offered him a boon, but Prahlāda said:

*mā māṃ pralobhayotpatty āsaktam kāmeṣu tair varaiḥ
tat saṅga bhīto nirviṇṇo mumukṣus tvām upaśritaḥ
bhṛtya lakṣaṇa jijñāsur bhaktam kāmeṣv acodayat
bhavān saṁsāra bījeṣu hṛdaya granthiṣu prabho
nānyathā te’khila guro ghaṭeta karuṇātmanaḥ
yas tu āśisa āśās te na sa bhrtyaḥ sa vai vaṇik
(Śrīmad Bhāgavata, 7.10.2-4)*

“O Lord! O Universal teacher! I am very much afraid of attachment to material desires, so I took shelter of You for the sake of renouncing them. My heart is naturally contaminated by material desires, so please don't make me greedy for any material boons. Are you offering me boons that will cause my bondage to the material world and that are the seed of the knot in the heart simply to show what are the symptoms of a devotee? Otherwise how is it possible that You, who are so merciful, are engaging me in such unwanted efforts? Those who serve You with the desire to gain something worldly are not servants, but merchants!”

The purport of these words of Prahlāda Mahāśaya is that the merciful Lord can never offer the devotees blessings like wealth, followers and women, which create the knot in the heart that binds one to the material world. If He does so, then it is only to give an example of what is a materialistic devotee. When they see that the pure devotee does not ask for any other blessing than devotional service, the materialistic people of the world can easily understand their greatness. Those who do ask for material blessings in exchange of their service are simply merchants. Merchants try to use a cheap object to make a lot of profit and similarly a materialistic devotee tries to get great opulence from God by offering Him some cheap flowers or food. Śrīmat Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.22):

*bhukti mukti sprhā yāvat piśācī hṛdi vartate
tāvad bhakti sukhasyātra katham abhyudayo bhavet*

“How can the bliss of devotion appear in the heart as long as the witch-like desires for enjoyment and liberation dwell in it?”

Whatever a haunted person eats is consumed by the ghost. Therefore such a person remains always very skinny. In the same way all the endeavours in *bhajana* of the devotee who desires enjoyment or liberation is consumed by those desires, and in this way his devotional life remains very meagre. Therefore the merciful Lord has given those materialistic devotees the sweetness of His names, forms, and qualities to relish, to chase these witches out of the heart. In this way He personally cleanses their hearts.

*kṛṣṇa kohe - āmāy bhaje, māge biṣoy sukha
amṛta chāḍi biṣa māge, ei boḍo mūrkhā
āmi vijñā - ei mūrkhē viṣoy kene dibo ?
sva caraṇāmṛta diya biṣoy bhulāibo
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā)*

Kṛṣṇa says: “The devotee who worships Me for the sake of sense enjoyment is a big fool! He gives up nectar for the sake of poison! I am wise! Why should I give this fool sense-enjoyment? I will make him forget about it by giving him the nectar of My lotus feet!”

Śrīmad Bhāgavata also says (5.19.26): *svayam vidhatte bhajatām anicchatām icchāpidhānam nija pāda pallavam*. “The Lord removes the material desires of those

who worship Him for the sake of getting wealth and followers and gives them His lotus feet.” Śrīmat Jīva Gosvāmī writes in his commentary on that verse: *sa tu parama kārūṇikaḥ tat pāda pallava mādhyurya jñānena tad anicchatām api bhajatām icchāpidhānam sarva kāma samāpakam nija pāda pallavam eva vidhatte - tebhyo dadātīty arthaḥ. yathā mata carvyamāṇām mṛttikām bālaka mukhād apasārya tatra khaṇḍam dadāti tadvad iti bhāvah.* “Those who do not know how sweet the Lord’s lotus feet are do not desire to attain them. When they start to worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa, then the all-merciful Lord will give them His lotus feet which fulfill all desires. It is just as when a child eats clay. The mother will take the harmful clay out of his mouth and put a very sweet piece of rock candy in it.”

In this way the Lord grants transcendental pure devotion to the aspirants, who are known as *sakāma-bhaktas* (devotees who still cherish personal desires), and removes the desires for wealth, followers etc. from their hearts by His grace, blessing them with the attainment of pure transcendental devotion.

Usually the desires for wealth and followers are removed from the neophyte *sakāma-bhakta*’s heart by the grace of a great soul and he thus becomes blessed with pure devotion. In Śrīmad Bhāgavata, Lord Kapiladeva describes the devotion performed in the mode of darkness (*tāmasa*), passion (*rājasa*) and goodness (*sāttvikaḥ*). *Sāttvika* devotion is known as *kaivalya-kāmā*. The devotee who desires oneness with God is here described as *sāttvika*. Actually devotion is the essence of the Lord’s *samvit* (knowledge) and *hlādinī* (bliss) potencies, and is therefore transcendental to the three modes of material nature. Devotion has no connection with the three mundane modes *tāmasa*, *rājasa*, and *sattva*, but Lord Kapila divides it as such to give examples of the different levels of materially motivated devotees. His definition of *tāmasika* devotion runs as follows (*Bhāg.* 3.29.8):

*abhisandhāya yaddhimsām dambham māsaryam eva vā
samrambhī bhinna dṛg bhāvaṁ mayi kuryāt sa tāmasaḥ*

“A person who worships Me with violence, pride, anger and envy and who has a separate vision, in other words, who does not care about the happiness and distress of others as he is concerned about his own happiness and distress, and therefore is bereft of all feelings of compassion toward others, worships Me in the mode of darkness.” Such a *tāmasika* devotee can become a pure devotee by associating with pure devotees and thus receiving their mercy.

It is said that once upon a time a king in South India offered 108 golden lotus flowers to the deity of Śrī Raṅganātha. The golden lotus flowers were studded with jewels and pearls and placed in layers at the deity’s lotus feet. Afterwards one devoted *brāhmaṇa* came and offered a huge amount of Tulasī-leaves to the deity, covering over a couple of the golden lotus flowers with them. The king noticed it and began to chastise the *brāhmaṇa*, who was a pure devotee. The *brāhmaṇa* explained to the king that Tulasī-leaves are more dear to the Lord than golden lotus flowers or jewels and pearls. Hearing this, the *tāmasika* king became blind with anger and swore that he would have the Lord’s audience before the *brāhmaṇa*

would receive it. The king went home and commenced a great sacrifice to please Lord Viṣṇu, but while the sacrifice was going on he heard from a reliable source that the *brāhmaṇa* had already attained the Lord's audience. The envious king was so upset with this that he thought of killing himself by jumping into the sacrificial fire. Burning in the fire of envy, he circumambulated the sacrificial pit and just as he was about to jump in it, the Lord, who is called *yajña-puruṣa*, the Lord of Sacrifice, rose from the fire and said: "O King! Even if you give up your body a hundred times in this way, still it will not bring you closer to Me! But when I granted My personal audience to that pure devotee-*brāhmaṇa*, he prayed to Me to be so merciful to also give My audience to you. Therefore give up your envious mood and worship Me in a pure mood, then you will be blessed with *prema*. I can never be attained when you worship me in the modes of darkness or passion!" Saying this, the Lord disappeared and the king, hearing thus that the pure devotee-*brāhmaṇa* had prayed for his benefit, gave up his envious mood and became blessed with a pure devotional attitude towards the Lord.

The *Bhāgavata* (3.29.9) gives the following definition of *rajasika* (passionate) devotion:

*viṣayān abhisandhāya yaśa aiśvaryam eva vā
arcād āvarcayed yo mām pṛthag bhāvaḥ sa rājasah*

"A person who worships Me with great pomp for the attainment of sense enjoyment, fame or luxuries, and who has a separate (selfish or dualistic) vision (thinking of other things than Me), is in the mode of passion."

By the grace of the great devotees such a person can also give up such desires and be blessed with the treasure of pure devotion. The best example is that of Dhruva Mahārāja. He was pierced by the arrow-like words of his stepmother and very anxiously he invoked the descent of the Lord on the order of his mother, praying to Him for the inheritance of his father's throne. But when he attained the audience and the mercy of the great sage Nārada he gave up his desire for a kingdom and his heart became absorbed in the pure devotional service of the Lord. Later, when he attained the Lord's direct audience, Dhruva Mahāśaya prayed:

*yā nirvṛtis tanubhṛtām tava pādapadma
dhyānād bhavaj jana kathā śravaṇena vā syāt
sā brahmaṇi sva mahimāny api nātha mā bhūt
kintv antakāsi lulitāt patatām vimānāt
bhaktiṃ muhuḥ pravahatām tvayi me prasaṅgo
bhūyād ananta mahatām amalāśayānām
yenāñjasolbaṇam uru vyasanam bhavābdhim
neṣye bhavad guṇa kathāmṛta pāna mattam
(Śrīmad Bhāgavata, 4.9.10-11)*

"O Lord! The experience of the greatness of Your *brahman*-feature cannot be compared to the ecstasy one feels from meditating on Your lotus feet or hearing

about You from Your devotees, what to speak of the sensual pleasures of the heavenly planets! Even the residents of heaven fall down from their airplanes when they are hit by the sword of invincible time! O Unlimited Lord! May I get the association of pure-hearted great souls who are fully surrendered to You! I will easily be able to cross the ocean of material miseries, which is full of dangers, by becoming intoxicated with the nectar of talks about Your glories in their company!”

This is how the faith and devotion of Dhruva Mahāśaya became free from material tinges. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* (3.29.10) defines *sāttvika* devotion as follows:

*karma nirhāram uddiśya parasmin vā tad arpaṇam
yajed yaṣṭavyam iti vā pṛthag bhāvaḥ sa sāttvikaḥ*

“The person who offers his activities to Me (to become liberated from the reactions to his *karma*) and who has a separatist attitude (liberation being more important to him than devotion) worships Me in the mode of goodness.”

Also the devotees who desire liberation are freed from such desires by the grace of a pure devotee. In *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* it is described:

*mumukṣu – jagate aneka saṁsārika jana
mukti lāgi bhaktye kore kṛṣṇera bhajana
sei sabhe sādhu saṅge guṇa sphurāya
kṛṣṇa bhajana korāya mumukṣā chādāya
nāradera saṅge śaunakādi munigaṇa
mumukṣā chādīyā koilo kṛṣṇera bhajana.*

“There are many people in the material world who desire liberation and who worship Kṛṣṇa for that purpose. They will all become qualified devotees when they associate with saints; thus they will worship Kṛṣṇa purely, giving up their desire for liberation. When the sages headed by Śaunaka associated with Nārada Muni, they began to worship Kṛṣṇa, giving up their desire for liberation.”

After that (*Bhāg.* 3.29.11-13) Kapiladeva defines pure transcendental faith and devotion:

*mad guṇa śruti mātrena mayi sarva guhāśaye
mano gatir avichinna yathā gaṅgāmbhaso’mbudhau
lakṣaṇam bhakti yogasya nirguṇasya hy udāhṛtam
ahaituky avyavahitā yā bhaktiḥ puruṣottame
sālokya sārṣṭi sārūpya sāmīpyaikatvam apy uta
dīyamānam na gṛhnanti vinā mat sevnam janāḥ*

“Simply by hearing about My glories, the minds of the pure devotees go directly to Me, who am sitting in the cave of everyone’s hearts, as the Gaṅgā flows into the ocean. The definition of transcendental devotion to the Supreme Person is that it is causeless and uninterrupted. Even if I offer them residence on My planet, opulence

equal to Mine, a form equal to Mine, a place close to Me, or even oneness with Me, My devotees will not accept it without having My devotional service.”

Such devotees only desire pure devotional service, therefore Mahāprabhu said *mama janmani janmanīśvare bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi* – “O Lord of the Universe! I only pray for causeless devotional service unto You, birth after birth!” One may ask here: will such a pure devotee have to suffer the tribulations of birth and death again and again? Mahāprabhu personally told Sanātana Gosvāmī in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*:

*prabhu kohe - vaiṣṇava deha 'prākṛta' kabhu noy
aprākṛta deha bhaktera cid ānandamoy
dīkṣā kāle bhakta kore ātma samarpaṇa
sei kāle kṛṣṇa tāre kore ātma sama
sei deha tāra kore cid ānandamoy
aprākṛta dehe tāra caraṇa bhajoy*

“The body of a Vaiṣṇava is never material. The devotee’s body consists of pure transcendental bliss. At the time of initiation the devotee surrenders himself, and at that time Kṛṣṇa considers him to be equal to Himself. Kṛṣṇa then makes his body full of transcendental bliss, and in this spiritual body the devotee serves His lotus feet.”

This automatically means that the devotee is already freed from all karmic reactions which cause ordinary persons to take one birth after the other in the material world. The devotee takes birth in the material world simply according to the Lord’s wish, and not because of his previous birth’s *karma*. This is the Vaiṣṇava-philosophy. He must take birth until he has attained the perfection of *prema* (which is beyond liberation) and that perfection cannot be attained without accepting a material body. Even after attaining *prema*, a devotee may still take birth again in this world, simply to be able to relish the sweetness of *sādhana bhakti*, devotion in practice. Therefore, the repeated birth and death of the Vaiṣṇava is not a miserable affair, as is the case with the conditioned souls who suffer tremendously while accepting and giving up their material bodies. In the Uttara khaṇḍa of the Padma Purāṇa it is written: *na karma bandhanam janma vaiṣṇavānām ca vidyate* – “The Vaiṣṇavas do not take birth because of their bondage to *karma*.” The secret is that the Lord does not let the devotee know this fact, otherwise his humility could be lost, and when humility is lost, there will surely be loss in devotion. That is why the devotees also think that they have to accept birth and death because of their bondage to *karma*, and this is why Prahlāda prays to Lord Nṛsimha-deva: *nātha! janma sahasreṣu yeṣu yeṣu bhavāmy aham teṣu teṣu acyuta bhakti acyutāsti sadā tvayi* – “O Lord! I may have to take thousands of births according to my *karma*, but in whatever species I may take birth, O Acyuta, may I have unflinching devotion for You!” (Viṣṇu Purāṇa) Śrī Vidyāpati Ṭhākura similarly prays:

kiye mānuṣa paśu, pākhī bhae janamiye,

*athavā kīṭa pataṅgo
karama vipāke, gatāgati punaḥ punaḥ,
mati rahu tuya parasaṅga*

“According to my *karma* I may take birth again and again as a human being, an animal, a bird, a worm or an insect, but may my mind always be attached to You!”

Śrīman Mahāprabhu said: “O Lord! Let me have causeless devotion for You, birth after birth!” In the beginning of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, Śrī Sūta Muni gave Śaunaka and the sages the definition of the supreme religious principle:

*sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaituky apratihātā yayātma suprasīdati*

“The supreme religion for mankind is devotion unto the Supreme Lord, who is not perceived by the material senses. Such devotion is causeless and unhampered and fully satisfies the self.”

Śrīdhara Svāmī explains the word *ahaituki* as follows: *hetuḥ phalābhisandhānam tad rahitaḥ* – “There is no desire for any fruitive result.” The service of the Lord’s lotus feet is free from desires for any material or spiritual benefit. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī writes: *tasyāḥ bhakteḥ svarūpa guṇam āha – svata eva sukha-rūpatvād ahaitukī phalāntarānusandhāna rahita* – “The word *ahaitukī* stands for the constitutional position of pure devotion. Devotion is blissful in itself, so *ahaitukī* means with no other purpose but to please Lord Hari.” This devotion is the essence of the Lord’s knowledge-potency (*samvit-śakti*) linked to His bliss-potency (*hlādinī-śakti*). “Essence” means here desires that are favorable to God, and there are no other desires but these in the hearts and the minds of the pure devotees. Pure devotees keep other desires far away. A beautiful example is given in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* (6.11.24-26), where the pure devotee Vṛtrāsura prays to the Lord as follows:

*ahaṁ hare tava padaika mūla
dāsānudāso bhavitāsmi bhūyaḥ
manaḥ smaretasu pater guṇānām
gṛṇīta vāk karma karotu kayāḥ
na nākapṛṣṭhaṁ na ca pārameṣṭhyaṁ
na sārvaḥaumaṁ na rasādhipatyam
na yogasiddhīr apunarbhavam vā
samañjasa tvāviraḥayya kāṅkṣe
ajāta pakṣā iva mātaram khagāḥ
stanyaṁ yathā vatsatarāḥ kṣudhārtāḥ
priyaṁ priyeva vyuṣitaṁ viṣaṅṅā
mano’ravindākṣa didṛkṣate tvām*

“O Lord Hari! I am the servant of the servant of those devotees who are fully surrendered to Your lotus feet, and I will remain so! O Lord of my life! May my mind remember Your qualities, may my words glorify Your attributes and may my

body be engaged in Your devotional service! O Ocean of all good fortune! I don't desire a place in the heavenly planets, nor Lordship over the world, nor the position of Lord Brahmā, nor the Lordship over the subterranean worlds, nor any mystic perfection, nor liberation, if that will separate me from You! O Lotus-eyed One! I desire to see You, just as a small bird that has no wings desires to see its mother, the calf desires the udder of the cow or the wife desires to see her husband who has gone abroad!"

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments on the last verse that the baby-bird has no other shelter but the mother, because it doesn't have its own wings yet and therefore cannot accompany its mother. It is completely helpless, incapable and dependent, therefore only the mother can be merciful to it. Others cannot possibly feel as much love and compassion for it as the mother-bird. In the same way Vṛtrāsura is completely incapable and dependent and feels pure love for the Lord. The Lord's extraordinary compassion on him is suggested here. It is also described here that Vṛtrāsura was as eager and anxious to see the Lord as the baby-bird is to see its mother. But there is one difference. The baby-bird is mainly eager to see its mother because of the eatables that she will bring, not so much for the mother herself. Therefore Vṛtrāsura was not fully satisfied with the first example and continued by saying *stanyam yathā vatsatarah kṣudhārtāḥ* – "I am eager for You as the calf is eager for its mother's udders." The calf is as eager to see its mother as it is for her udders, for it sees no difference between the mother and her udders. Therefore this example is superior to the previous one. This calf is a very young one, so the cowherd boy is not yet able to bind it up and keep it away from the mother by force. Cows are naturally more affectionate to their young ones as are mothers in other species of life, that is also why this example is superior to the previous one. Still, Vṛtrāsura was not fully satisfied with this example either, so he prayed: *priyam priyeva vyuṣitam viṣaṇṇā* – "I desire to see You just as a sad wife desires to see her husband who is abroad." It is clear that this relationship is the most intense one in love. The faithful wife will die if her husband dies, regardless of whether she is young or old, so if her husband has gone abroad, she has a strong desire to see him and to please him with her causeless and exclusive service, for she has given her life to him. Similarly, Vṛtrāsura has no other desire in his mind but to see and serve his Lord. After this, he says:

*mamottamaśloka janeṣu sakhyam
saṁsāra cakre bhramataḥ sva karmabhiḥ
tvan māyayātmātmaja dāra geheṣv
āsakta cittasya na nātha bhūyāt
(Śrīmad Bhāgavata, 6.11.27)*

"O Lord! Wherever I may take my birth as I revolve in the cycle of birth and death, let me be befriended with Your devotees there! Let my mind not be attached to the ropes of *māyā* in the form of house, wife, children and body!"

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī writes about this in his *Prīti Sandarbha* (72): *tad etac chuddha premodgāramayatvenaiva śrīmad vṛtravadho'sau vilakṣaṇatvac chrī bhāgavata lakṣaṇeṣu purāṇāntareṣu gaṇyate vṛtrāsuraavadhopetaṁ tad bhāgavatam iṣyate iti* – “One of the special characteristics of Śrīmad Bhāgavata is that it contains the story of Vṛtrāsura because of Vṛtrāsura’s pure love of God which he expressed in the above quoted verses. This is one of the special characteristics which distinguishes Śrīmad Bhāgavata from other Purāṇas and thus it is described in those other Purāṇas.”

Although Śrīman Mahāprabhu is Himself the highest truth, He prays here for pure, exclusive devotion to the Lord. Mahāprabhu explained this verse as follows:

*dhana, jana nāhi māgo - kavita sundarī
śuddha bhakti deho more kṛṣṇa! kṛpā kori*

“Please, O Kṛṣṇa! Just give me pure devotion unto You! I don’t ask for wealth, followers, poetry or a beautiful woman!”

verse 5

*ayi nanda-tanuja kiṅkaram
patitām mām viṣame bhavāmbudhau
kṛpayā tava pāda paṅkaja
sthita dhūlisadṛṣam vicintaya*

ayi - O!; *nanda-tanuja* - son of Nanda; *kiṅkaram* - servant; *patitām* - fallen; *mām* - me; *viṣame* - terrible; *bhavāmbudhau* - in the ocean of material existence; *kṛpayā* - please; *tava* - your; *pāda* - feet; *paṅkaja* - lotus; *sthita* - staying; *dhūli* - dust; *sadṛṣam* - just like; *vicintaya* - think of.

O Son of Mahārāja Nanda (Kṛṣṇa)! I have fallen into the terrible ocean of material existence. Please consider me to be a speck of dust attached to Your lotus feet!

Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī describes how the Lord recited this fifth verse:

*ati dainye puna māge dāsya bhakti dāna
āpanāke kore saṁsāra jīva abhimāna*

“Very humbly, the Lord again prayed for the gift of devotion, considering Himself to be a conditioned soul.”

The ocean of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s humility swelled up once more, and considering Himself to be a soul bound up by the *māyā* of material existence, He

recited this fifth verse. This kind of humility is the limit of divine manifestation and the Lord showed it to teach all the conditioned souls as He came down the staircase of His compassion. The more the living entities head towards the highest truth and bliss through renunciation and worship, the more their existence as individual souls becomes magnified, and similarly the more the Supreme Lord descends to the platform of falsehood, bondage and misery (out of compassion for the fallen, conditioned souls) the more His Godhood becomes magnified. There is nothing in this world which can make the waves of the Lord's transcendental desires rise so high as the love of His devotees, and because of this He descends more and more down the staircase of His compassion.

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* we can see that the Original Personality of Godhead, Śrī Vrajendranandana, was stealing and eating butter and yoghurt from the houses of the cowherds and cowherdresses. When does a human being commit theft? As soon as he is very greedy after something and he cannot get that thing through the normal channels, his intense greed then takes his intelligence and his sense of discrimination away and he steals it. Although Kṛṣṇa is eternally satisfied in Himself, He was so much captured by the love of the people of Vraja that He came so far down the staircase of His compassion as to even steal butter from their houses. Similarly, by considering Himself to be a conditioned soul, Śrīman Mahāprabhu has now come down the staircase of compassion, simply to teach all the people.

First of all, Śrīman Mahāprabhu says: “*Ayi Nanda-tanuja!* I have fallen in the terrible ocean of material existence!” *Ayi* is the word a female person generally uses upon addressing someone. When a male person addresses someone, it's supposed to be “*He Nanda-tanuja!*” From this we can understand that Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu has humbly accepted the mood of Śrī Rādhā. The *bhāva* of Śrī Rādhā is *vibhu*, all-pervading and supreme, and from Her *mahābhāva* all other *bhāvas* become manifest. In the pastimes of Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu an unbroken stream of His relishing of Rādhā-*bhāva* is flowing. In *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, for instance, it is said that He was repeatedly listening to the stories about Dhruva Mahārāja and Prahlāda Mahārāja from the *Bhāgavata*:

*gadādhara sammukhe poḍen bhāgavata
śuniyā prakāṣe prabhu kṛṣṇa bhāva yoto.
dhruvera caritra āra prahlāda caritra
śatavṛtti koriyā śunen sāvahita*

“Again and again the Lord carefully listened to the stories about Dhruva and Prahlāda that were read to Him by Gadādhara Paṇḍita from *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*. As the Lord sat before Gadādhara, He manifested so many moods of love for Kṛṣṇa.”

When Mahāprabhu heard how eagerly Dhruva was crying out to Śrī Hari He remembered Śrī Rādhā's passionate love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Upon hearing how Prahlāda became victorious over the demons who tortured him, and how the poison they administered to him tasted like nectar to him, Mahāprabhu, accepting the feelings

of Śrī Rādhā, thought: “I am also stopped from serving Kṛṣṇa in so many ways – by My mother-in-law, by My sister-in-law, by local traditions, by family traditions, in the house and in the forest, and I have to conquer those obstacles. I should also consider the poison of the defamation of a chaste housewife to be as delicious as nectar!” In this way one can understand the first word of this verse. Mahāprabhu accepts the mood of a neophyte devotee in the mood of Śrī Rādhā, saying: “Ayi son of Mahārāja Nanda! I am Your fallen maidservant and I have fallen into the terrible prisonhouse of My household-affairs. Please consider this fallen maidservant to be just like a speck of dust on the soles of Your lotus-like feet!”

There is another secret in the way Mahāprabhu addresses Kṛṣṇa here as “Ayi Nanda-tanuja”. *Tanuja* means “born from the body”, a combination of the father’s semen and the mother’s ovum. Does God take His birth in such a way? His form is, after all, transcendental! How can He be called “born from Nanda’s body”? In *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* (10.5.1) Śrī Śuka Muni has also said: *nandas tvātmaja utpanne jātāhlādo mahāmanāḥ* – “The high-souled Nanda was ecstatic because a son (*ātmaja*) had been born to him.” Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in his *Toṣaṇī-Ṭīkā* on this verse: *atrātmajatvam utpannatvam ātmajatvenotpannatvam ityārtha-trayaṁ pratyekānvayābhyāṁ vyajyate nīlotpalavad iti*. “From the words *ātmaja utpanne* in the *śloka* we can understand the meaning of these two particular words and their mutual relationship. For instance when we say *nīlotpala* (blue lotus), we must first know what is a lotus and what is the colour blue and then we can picture ourselves a blue lotus flower. Otherwise we can not know or understand what is a blue lotus flower.”

In *Bhagavad Gītā* (4.9), Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna:

*janma karma ca me divyam evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so’rjuna*

“O Arjuna! Anyone who knows the truth about My divine birth and activities will not take birth again in the material world, but he will attain Me!”

Śrīpāda Rāmānujācārya writes in his commentary on this verse: *madīya divya janma ceṣṭita yathārtha jñānena vidhvasta samasta mat samāśrayaṇa virodhi pāpmā asminn eva janmani mām āśritya mad eka priyo mām eva prāpnoti*. “When one knows the actual truth about My transcendental birth and activities, all sins, which are stopping one from surrendering unto Me, will be destroyed and one will attain Me even in this very lifetime through the practice of loving devotion.”

We can easily understand that Kṛṣṇa’s birth is very special, if anyone who knows it in truth is himself freed from further rebirth! The secret about Him being anyone’s born son is that only the love of His devotee can cause waves of transcendental desire in Him. The love of a devotee in the parental mood makes Him forget all His divine prowess and causes Him to take birth as that devotee’s son. When the Lord sees how eager such a loving devotee is to rear and to fondle Him as a child, He becomes eager to relish that love and He agrees to become the child of that devotee. Although He is unborn, He then imitates the activities of

childbirth, although His transcendental form is actually eternally perfect and self-manifest. Actually His body was never made by the semen of any father and the ovum of any mother, nevertheless He is eternally known as the “born son” of His eternally liberated parents, Nanda and Yaśodā. From this we come to know the Lord as One who always desires to relish the taste of His devotees’ love for Him. Therefore not only the devotee needs the Lord, the Lord also needs the devotees! Mahāprabhu said: “Ayi Nanda-tanuja! You are eager to taste the love of Your devotees, therefore not only I need You, but You also need me!” That is the purport of this address.

“Ayi Nanda-tanuja! I have fallen into this terrible ocean of material existence!” Surely this world is miserable, hard to tolerate and burning like poison. Bhagavān Mahāprabhu, by the mere chanting of whose name the ocean of *samsāra* dries, and upon merely seeing whom the mankind can easily cross the ocean of *samsāra* and attain the treasure of *prema*, warns all the living entities to beware the ocean of *samsāra* with these instructions. Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī describes the terrible ocean of matter as follows:

*samsāra duḥkha jaladhau patitasya kāma
krodhādi nakra makaraiḥ kavalikṛtasya
durvāsanā nigadītasya nirāśrayasya
caitanya candra! mama dehi padāvalambam
(Caitanya Candrāmṛta, 54)*

“O Śrī Caitanya Candra! I have fallen into the ocean of material miseries where I am swallowed by the crocodiles and sharks of lust and anger and bound up by the chains of wicked desires. Give this helpless soul shelter at Your lotus feet!”

When a soul falls into this ocean of misery he is completely helpless. When one asks: “Why should you be helpless in this world? Don’t you have a mother and father, sons and daughters, friends and relatives? Why do you feel so helpless then?”, then the answer is: “My parents, brothers and children – all of them are similarly struggling helplessly in this terrible ocean, being attacked by their six enemies, namely lust, anger, greed and so, which are like sharks and crocodiles that are snapping and chewing on them”. Without the mercy of the devotees or without taking shelter of Śrī Govinda’s lotus feet *yogīs*, *karmīs*, and *jñānīs* cannot escape from these sharks and crocodiles. We will give a few examples below:

When the demigods were suffering from the misbehaviour of a demon named Tārakā, they came to Lord Brahmā, wanting to find a solution to their problem, and Lord Brahmā told them: “Only a son born from Lord Śiva’s semen can kill the Tārakā-demon. After Satīdevī committed suicide during Dakṣa’s sacrifice (see *Bhāgavata*, fourth canto) she took birth as the daughter of the Himālayas (Pārvatī) and pleased Mahādeva once more with her worship of Him. But until now Śrīman Mahādeva is fully absorbed in *samādhi* (mystic trance) and nobody knows how long it will take before that trance will break! When the demigods will find some

way to break Mahādeva's trance and to make Him marry Pārvatī, then Tārakāsura can be destroyed!"

On Lord Brahmā's advice the demigods went to Kāmadeva (Cupid) and begged him to help them to break Mahādeva's *samādhi*. Kāmadeva was too proud to admit to the demigods that he was unable to break Yogīśvara Mahādeva's *samādhi*, so he accepted their request. On the way, Cupid was thinking to himself: "I think it is inevitable that I will perish as a result of my upcoming misdeeds! Let me at least once make all the people of the world acquainted with my powers!" Thinking like that, he released his five flower-arrows on the world, causing all the people, including *karmīs*, *yogīs* and *jñānīs* to be deluded. No one could remain protected except for those who surrendered unto Śrī Hari. This is corroborated by the great poet Tulasī Dāsa in his *Rāma Carita Mānasa*:

*dharā na kāhu dhīra, sab ke man manasija hare
yāhi rākhe raghuvīra, te ubare tehi kālamahan*

"At that time nobody could remain calm, except for those who were protected by Raghuvīra (Lord Rāma)!"

The force of anger even caused the very powerful sage Durvāsā to persecute the great devotee-king Ambarīṣa, but this great devotee tolerated everything and thus became known for his gravity. Blinded by anger the very powerful sage Viśvāmitra killed the hundred sons of the *brāhmaṇa* Vaśiṣṭa, but because of his great devotion Vaśiṣṭa was able to tolerate it. Of course, the sages Durvāsā and Viśvāmitra were not angry as ordinary people in the mode of ignorance are, but they became angry for a special purpose. They wanted to teach all the practising devotees of the world how powerful the sharks and crocodiles of lust and anger, which are swimming in the ocean of material misery, are.

Without taking shelter of the devotees who have surrendered to the Lord's lotus feet it is also not easy to conquer greed for wealth and so. Once upon a time, Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa had a loving quarrel with Each other, and Lakṣmīdevī said: "The people of the world desire Me (wealth) more than You (God)!" Lord Nārāyaṇa said: "All right, let's test it and see! Come along with Me and use all of Your powers, and we will see who will win!"

Lord Nārāyaṇa went to a *dharmasālā* (nonprofit guesthouse) dressed as a *sādhu*, and began to perform a very sweet *kīrtana* there. The owner of the *dharmasālā* became attracted to the *kīrtana* and said: "O *sādhu bābā*! Please bless me by doing *kīrtana* in my *dharmasālā* for a few days!" The disguised Lord Nārāyaṇa said: "I will do *kīrtana* in this particular room, but I won't go to any other room, even if you told Me to!" The owner said: "No no! Stay in that room as long as you like! No matter how much money other pilgrims will offer me, I will not give this room to anyone!" Kamalā-devī (Lakṣmī) understood Lord Nārāyaṇa's plan and she disguised Herself as a princess, asking the owner for that particular room in which Lord Nārāyaṇa was staying. The owner told Her: "One *sādhu* is doing *kīrtana* there, please take another room!" Kamalā said: "No, I like this room! If you send this

sādhu to another room and give it to Me, then I will give you a thousand rupees a day!” The owner said: “One thousand rupees a day!! All right, just wait, let me speak with that *sādhu*!” The owner then went to the *sādhu* and told him: “Mahārāja! For a special reason you’ll have to leave this room!” Lord Nārāyaṇa then understood that Lakṣmī-devī had come and said: “But you told Me that you wouldn’t give this room to anyone! Now why are you telling Me to leave?” The owner replied: “You see, Mahārāja, we are worldly people! A princess offers us a thousand rupees a day for this room! What benefit will you have if materialistic people like us will suffer such a great financial loss, tell me? I will give You even a better room than this one! Please go to that room!” The *sādhu* said: “My dear owner, you told Me personally that you wouldn’t give this room to anyone, no matter how much money was offered for it! Why are you now getting enchanted by this financial offer and send Me away?” The owner replied: “Mahārāja! How could I know that someone could offer me a thousand rupees a day for this room? We are ordinary people, we cannot give up our enchantment by this amount of money! What is the harm for You if You move to another room? Therefore do not insist and go to the room that I point out to You, otherwise I will throw Your belongings out and force You to vacate the room!” When they saw this, Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa both disappeared. Lakṣmī-devī had won!

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said: “Devi! Now let’s go to another place! If You win here again, then I’ll be completely defeated!” Now Lord Nārāyaṇa went to the house of a great devotee, in the same disguise. When that devotee heard the *kīrtana* there was no limit to his bliss and he very respectfully prayed to the Lord to bless him by staying in a room in his house, so that he could hear the *kīrtana* for a few days. The *sādhu* said: “But if anyone wants to rent this room, even for a lot of rent, you should not give it! I want to stay in this room!” The devotee-landlord said: “No, I won’t give this room for even ten million rupees!” Then Lakṣmī-devī came and offered the devotee-landlord a huge amount of money for renting that room, but the devotee said: “O Queen! Keep Your money! Please go away! There is a great soul living in that room from whom I have gotten great transcendental opulence! What is Your insignificant wealth compared to that?” This time Lord Nārāyaṇa was victorious. In this way Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa showed that no one can be released from the ocean of material existence and its sharks and crocodiles in the shape of lust and greed without the grace of Bhaktidevī, the goddess of devotion.

The story of king Citraketu in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* (sixth canto) is a good example of *moha*, or illusion. Bewildered by the desire for a son, king Citraketu married ten million women, but still he did not get even one son. By chance the sage Aṅgirā visited him once and the king immediately asked him for the boon of a son. The sage Aṅgirā explained to the king that a son was simply an illusory blessing that would bring him a lot of misery, but the king could not give up this illusion and again asked the sage for a son. So Aṅgirā performed a sacrifice to give the king a son and told the king’s chief queen, who was named Kṛtadyuti, to eat the remnants of the food offered in the sacrifice. Soon afterwards a son was born to her and the

king, totally enchanted by the child, did not leave her room anymore to see any other queen. The other queens began to burn in the fire of envy and finally killed the baby by poisoning it. There was no limit to the king's misery and his lamentations. Some time later Aṅgirā came back to the king's palace, along with his friend Nārada Muni. The sage Aṅgirā was so powerful that he could make the dead baby speak spiritual knowledge that destroyed the king's delusion. The king thus gave up his enchantment with family life and became a great devotee by the mercy of these sages. The same thing counts for other *anarthas* such as *mada* (pride out of delusion). There's no other way to become free from the crocodiles and snakes of lust and anger, which freely swim in the ocean of material existence, than to take shelter of the process of devotion, which finds its origin in the mercy of the great devotees. In the following song, Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura explains how we can make these sharks and crocodiles from enemies into great friends and assistants by engaging them in the Lord's service:

*kāma krodha lobha moha, mada mātsarya dambha saha,
sthāne sthāne niyukta koribo
ānanda kori hṛdoy, ripu kori parājoy,
anāyāse govinda bhajibo*

“I will engage lust, anger, greed, illusion, envy and pride all in Kṛṣṇa's service. Thus I can defeat these enemies with a blissful heart and easily worship Govinda.”

*kṛṣṇa seva kāmārpane, krodha bhakta dveṣi jane,
lobha sādhu saṅge hari kathā
moha iṣṭa lābha vine, mada kṛṣṇa guṇagāne,
niyukta koribo yathā tathā*

“I will engage my lusty desires in Kṛṣṇa's service, my anger towards those who envy His devotees, my greed in desiring to speak about Hari with the saints, my illusion when I cannot attain my beloved Lord and my intoxication by singing Kṛṣṇa's glories.”

*anyathā svatantra kāma, anarthādi yāra dhāma,
bhakti pathe sadā deya bhaṅga
kibā se korite pāre, kāma krodha sādhakere,
yadi hoy sādhu janāra saṅga*

“Otherwise lust will be an independent desire that always breaks up the path of devotion, being an abode of sin. But what can lust and anger do to the practising devotee when he is in the company of saints?”

Amongst the six aforementioned enemies Śrī Narottama did not mention envy, for the Śrīmad Bhāgavata opens with the words *nirmatsarānām satām*: the path of devotion is for non-envious saints only. An envious person cannot tolerate another person's superiority (*parotkarṣāsahanam mātsaryam*). In whomever's heart there is

matsarya, envy, there is also his wife *pratiṣṭhāsā*, the desire for distinction. From the union of this couple the twins *himsā* (violence) and *asūyā* (jealousy) are born. The terrible dancing of this demoniac family will crush all good qualities in the heart, so that the light of devotion cannot shine in it anymore.

The living beings who have fallen into the ocean of material existence are bound hand and foot by the chains of their sinful desires; *durvāsanā nigadītasya*. These are not ordinary ropes for binding, these are real, living, and terrible chains! On the bank of a big river was a village where almost everyone could swim because the village was often flooded. During a flood the people usually held on to floating pieces of timber to save themselves. One time when there was a flood the people saw something black floating downstream, which looked like a blanket. One person swam to it and held on to it, while his companions on the shore said: “Let go of this thing now, you can stand there!” That person replied: “Brother! I’ve let go of the blanket, but the blanket doesn’t let me go!” Actually, it was not a blanket, but a half-dead bear that was floating in the river in the hail and the rain. When people catch hold of it they may think that they’ve found some support, but actually the bear will catch firm hold of them instead! That bear represents the sounds, touches, forms, tastes and smells that are floating down the river of material existence. The people who are bound up by *māyā* consider these sense-objects to be most desirable and enjoyable, but then they are firmly caught by these attractions that will bring them only sorrow, disease and the three kinds of material miseries.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu said: “O Nandanandana! Actually I am Your eternal servant, but I have forgotten Your lotus feet and I have become bound up by *māyā*. What a miserable condition!

*kṛṣṇa nitya dāsa jīva tāhā bhuli gelo
sei doṣe māyā tāra golāya bāndhilo
tāte kṛṣṇa bhaje, kore gurura sevana
māyājāla chūṭe pāy kṛṣṇera caraṇa
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta)*

“The living being has forgotten that it is Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servant and because of that fault, *māyā* has bound him around the neck. But when he worships Kṛṣṇa and serves his *guru*, the net of *māyā* will break and he will attain Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.”

One may ask here: “If the living beings are Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servants, then why and when did they forget Śrī Kṛṣṇa? Is it possible for a Kṛṣṇa-conscious person ever to forget Kṛṣṇa?” The answer is given by Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī in his *Paramatma Sandarbha* (44): *tad evam ananta eva jīvākhya taṭasthaḥ śaktayaḥ. tatra tāsām varga dvayam. eko vargaḥ anādita eva bhagavad unmukhaḥ anyas tu anādita eva bhagavat parānmukhaḥ svabhāvataḥ tadīya jñāna bhāvāt tadīya jñānābhāvāc ca.* “There are innumerable spirit souls and they are the marginal potency of God. There are two classes of them: one class is favorable to God from beginningless time, and the

other class is turned away from God from beginningless time. The first class is naturally full of knowledge and the other is without knowledge.”

There is no other way for those souls who are conditioned by *māyā* in this terrible ocean of material existence than the grace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa or His devotees. Therefore Śrīman Mahāprabhu considers Himself to be an ordinary conditioned soul, just to teach all living beings and He prays to Kṛṣṇa: *kṛpayā tava pādapaṅkaja sthita dhūli sadṛśam vicintaya* – “Please consider Me to be a mere speck of dust at Your lotus feet!” The first word He uses is *kṛpayā*: there is no other recourse but mercy. Although sugarcane is naturally full of juice, the juice cannot come out without squeezing it. Similarly God is full of the juice of mercy, but without the devotees’ eagerness that juice will not come out. The Lord must therefore be worshipped with great eagerness. But success in *sādhana* is not only dependent on a great amount of effort. Only when the mercy descends the devotee can be blessed with the full perfection of love of God. Lord Brahmā says to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* (10.14.8) that those who await the mercy of God will inherit His lotus feet:

*tat te'nukampam susamīkṣyamāṇo
bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtam vipākam
hṛd vāg vapurbhir vidadhan namas te
jīveta yo muktipade sa dāyabhāk*

Lord Brahmā said: “O Lord! You are the ocean of all auspicious qualities! Those who silently tolerate all the reactions to previously performed acts with an unattached mind, and continue to offer their obeisances unto You with their bodies, minds and words, will inherit Your lotus feet, just as the son inherits the wealth of his father!”

Mahāprabhu says: “O Lord! Please consider this servant to be a mere speck of dust at Your lotus feet and bless this fallen servant with devotional service.” The Lord desires this because dust always sticks at the footsoles, it never falls off. The devotee should also lament: “Why doesn’t my mind always stick to those transcendently blissful lotus feet? Why is this wicked mind always absorbed in thinking of these disgusting sense objects instead? How unfortunate I am! Even in my dreams I’m absorbed in thinking of sense enjoyment! When will I think of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet in all stages of awareness: deep sleep, dreaming state and wakefulness? I should cry for being in such a situation!” The Lord said: “O Kṛṣṇa! I am Your *kiṅkara*!” The Sanskrit words *kiṅ karomi* mean “what service can I render?” and from that the word *kiṅkara*, or servant, is derived. It indicates someone who is eager to serve. When such eager desires appear in the mind the desires for sense enjoyment will slowly be given up and the Lord will not like to let the devotee down anymore, just as a speck of dust always sticks on the footsoles. The Lord personally explained this verse as follows:

*tomara nitya dāsa mui tomā pāsariyā
poḍiyācho bhavārṇave māyābaddha hoiyā*

*kṛpā kori koro more pada dhūli sama
tomāra sevaka koro tomāra sevana*

“I am Your eternal servant, but I have forgotten You. Now I have fallen into the ocean of material existence, being bound up by *māyā*. Please make Me like the dust at Your feet and make Your servant serve You!”

verse 6

*nayanam galad asru dhārayā
vadanam gadgada ruddhayā girā
pulkair nicitām vapuḥ kadā
tava nāmagrahaṇe bhaviṣyati*

nayanam - the eyes; *galad* - flow; *asru* - tears; *dhārayā* - with a stream; *vadanam* - the mouth; *gadgada* - faltering; *ruddhayā* - choked; *girā* - voice; *pulkair* - with goosepimples; *nicitām* - studded; *vapuḥ* - body; *kadā* - when; *tava* - Your; *nāma* - name; *grahaṇe* - in taking; *bhaviṣyati* - will be.

O Kṛṣṇa! When will tears of love stream from My eyes? When will My voice choke up and when will My body be studded with goosepimples of ecstasy when I chant Your holy name?

Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī explained this verse as follows:

*punaḥ ati utkaṅṭhā dainya hoilo udgama
kṛṣṇa ṭhāi māge saprema nāma-saṅkīrtana*

“Again great eagerness and humility appeared in the Lord’s heart as He prayed to Kṛṣṇa: ‘Let Me sing Your name with love!’”

The force of the Lord’s humility gradually increased and caused great eagerness to arise in Him. This eagerness is the very life-force of devotion which helps the devotee to attain perfection. The eagerness that Śrīman Mahāprabhu showed during His pastimes at Jagannātha Purī were meant to teach the practising devotees and is like a beacon for them. It is the best example and it is like the very life for the practising devotees. Eagerness is always the best means to attain what we desire. If there is no eagerness we cannot have anything. Without eagerness there is no taste in our endeavours, nor in our possible achievements. When a person gets a glass of cold water in the middle of the summer it will be greatly satisfying to him, but a person who feels no thirst does not even see the need for drinking water, let alone that he will relish it! The practising devotees, the perfected devotees and the eternally perfect devotees all thrive on eagerness. An aspirant

cannot attain the treasure of *rāga-bhakti* unless he has this eagerness. Without eagerness no one can subdue Kṛṣṇa with love.

For example, mother Yaśodā, who is an eternally perfect devotee, tried to bind Kṛṣṇa's belly with ropes again and again, but she couldn't. Each time the rope was two fingers too short. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in his commentary on that particular *Bhāgavata*-verse (10.9.15): *sthite'pi premṇi vaiyagrya viśeṣa taj jāta tat kṛpā viśeṣābhyām dvābhyām ūnatvena tad vaśīkaraṇam na syāt. ataeva dṛṣtvā pariśramam kṛṣṇaḥ kṛpayāsīt svabandhane iti vakṣyate*. When there is not sufficient eagerness to fully subdue God with one's love and if the Lord's mercy does not become fully manifest because there is a lack of such eagerness, then even the devotee who has pure love of God cannot fully subdue Him. The more eagerness the devotee shows to subdue the Lord with his love, the more the Lord shows His mercy by allowing Himself to be subdued accordingly by the devotee. If a devotee does not show his eagerness then the Lord will not bestow His mercy, therefore although it seems as if they are subduing the Lord on account of their pure love, they cannot completely subdue Him. Without the Lord's mercy and the devotees' eagerness nothing can fill up that deficiency. Therefore it is said here: "When Kṛṣṇa saw her (Yaśodā's) endeavours, He became merciful to her and allowed Himself to be bound by her."

The Lord will allow the devotee to bind Him up with love in accordance with the amount of eagerness he shows. As soon as Yaśomatī showed the right amount of eagerness, the Lord also showed His mercy and had Himself bound up by her. In the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, *Uttara Khaṇḍa*, it is said that Śrī Rādhārāṇī also bound Kṛṣṇa up with ropes. Therefore we speak of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara:

*saṅketāvasare cyute praṇayataḥ samrabdhayā rādhayā
prārabhya bhrūkuṭīm hiraṇya rasanā dāmnā nibaddhodaram
kārtikyām jananī kṛtotsava vare prastāvana pūrvakam
cātuni prathayantam ātta pulakam dhyāyema dāmodaram*

"Once, in the auspicious month of Kārtika, Kṛṣṇa could not meet His beloved Rādhārāṇī in the *kuñja* on time, so Śrīmatī frowned Her eyebrows out of loving anger and bound Kṛṣṇa around the belly with a golden rope. Śrī Kṛṣṇa then explained to Her that He was too late for His appointment because He had been held up in Mā Yaśomatī's festival, so Śrīmatī released Him again. We meditate on this Dāmodara, who is studded with goosepimples of loving ecstasy!"

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's love is always so full of great eagerness that there is never any lack of mercy from Kṛṣṇa's side. Śrīman Mahāprabhu is always floating in a great ocean of eagerness because He has accepted the mood of this Śrī Rādhā. Therefore, although He always fully relished Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweetness, He came down to the level of the practising devotee because of His natural eagerness and desired to be blessed with loving *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. Thus He taught the aspirants that those who have attained a life full of loving *nāma-bhajana* have become blessed with the best means of attaining God.

The Lord said: “O Lord! When will I be so fortunate that tears will stream from My eyes, My voice will choke and My body will be studded with goosepimples of loving ecstasy when I take part in the *nāma-saṅkīrtana*?” Thus the Lord expresses His desire for loving *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, blessing the people of the present age of Kali by preaching the *yuga-dharma*, the spiritual practice for this age. In all *yugas* (cosmic ages) the chanting of the holy name has the same power and the same incomparable glory, but in the other *yugas* (other than the Kali-yuga, like the Satya *yuga* and so on) the people, although they were living for thousands of years, could simply not gain unshakable faith in the fact that by simply by making one’s tongue vibrate the two syllables “Kṛṣṇa” one could easily attain a result millions of times greater than what they could attain by all their penances and meditation. The people of the age of Kali are unfortunate in all respects, and they don’t have the strength to perform all these disciplines, but they can easily place their faith in the glories of the holy name, and that’s why the holy name revealed its glories in the age of Kali and became its *yuga-dharma*, the prescribed method of achieving transcendental perfection. The devotees in the age of Kali gain perfection in the topmost surrender to God by preaching this *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. This is confirmed by Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī: *tad evaṁ kalau nāma kīrtana pracāra prabhāvenaiva parama bhagavat parāyanatva siddhir darśita (Bhakti Sandarbha, 244)*. We have said that one cannot taste the limitless sweetness of Kṛṣṇa’s name when the tongue is contaminated by *aparādha*, offenses. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* says that those whose hearts do not melt, whose eyes are not filled with tears and whose bodies do not erupt with goosepimples of ecstasy when they chant the holy name, alas! They have hearts that are harder than steel!

*tad aśma sāram hṛdayaṁ batedaṁ
yad grhyamānair hari nāma dheyaiḥ
na vikriyetātha yadā vikāro
netre jalaṁ gātra-ruheṣu harṣaḥ
(Śrīmad Bhāgavata, 2.3.24)*

In this verse (*nayanam galad aśru*) Mahāprabhu prays to the Lord for three *sāttvika* ecstasies, namely *aśru* (tears), *pulaka* (goosepimples) and *svara-bheda* (changing of the voice). Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (2.3.1-2) :

*kṛṣṇa sambandibhiḥ sākṣāt kiñcid vā vyadhānataḥ
bhāvaiś cittam ihākrantaṁ sattvam ity ucyate budhaiḥ
sattvād asmāt samutpannā ye ye bhāvas tu sāttvikāḥ*

“When the heart is touched by moods directly (in the form of the five basic relationships with Kṛṣṇa, like neutrality, servanthood, friendship etc.) or indirectly (in the form of the seven secondary moods like laughter, chivalry etc.) connected with Kṛṣṇa, the wise call this *sattva*, and the moods coming from that *sāttvika-bhāvas*.” There are eight such *sāttvika* moods:

*te stambha sveda romāncāḥ svarabhedo'tha vepathuḥ
vaivarṇyam aśru pralaya iṣṭeṣṭo sātṭvikāḥ smṛtāḥ
(Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, 2.3.16)*

“These eight transformations are 1) being stunned, 2) sweating, 3) horripilating, 4) changing of the voice, 5) shivering, 6) becoming pale, 7) fainting and 8) shedding tears.” Of these, Mahāprabhu prays for three, namely romāñca, svarabheda and aśru, while He performs *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. Actually, without *rati* none of these ecstasies can be called *sātṭvika*, even though they may appear on the body, because *rati* is the cause of the greatest ecstasy and astonishment. Without *rati* these *sātṭvikas* do not cause astonishment, therefore *rati* is the greatest emotion. This is also confirmed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī:

*sarvānanda camatkāra hetur bhāvo varo ratiḥ
ete hi tad vinā bhāvān na camatkāritāśrayāḥ
(Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, 2.3.70)*

These symptoms can be seen in all kinds of feeble creatures, like those who desire liberation or sense enjoyment, while they sing or hear the *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, but then it cannot really be called *sātṭvika-bhāva*, but a *sātṭvikābhāsa*, a semblance of *sātṭvika-bhāva*. This kind of semblance is not so ecstatic or astonishing. The Gosvāmīs say that these are the eight external symptoms of a devotee who has attained *rati*. Next to that there are also nine internal symptoms. When these symptoms are seen in the heart or in the mind of the devotee, then he has attained *rati* or *bhāva*:

*kṣāntir avyārtha kālatvaṁ viraktir māna śūnyatā
āśābandhaḥ samutkaṅṭhā nāma gāne sadā ruciḥ
āśakti tad guṇākhyāne prītis tad vasati sthale
ityādayo'nubhāvaḥ syur jāta bhāvānkure jane*

“Those in whom *bhāva* or *rati* has merely sprouted, are showing the following nine symptoms: 1) They are tolerant, 2) They don't waste their time, 3) They are renounced, 4) They are devoid of pride, 5) They are bound by firm hopes, 6) They are very eager, 7) They always have taste for chanting the holy name, 8) They are very attached to speaking about God, and 9) They love to live in His abode (Vṛndāvana or Navadvīpa).

1) *kṣānti* – *kṣobha hetāvapi prāpte kṣāntir akṣubhitātma* (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, 1.3.27) – “*Kṣānti* means that one is undisturbed although there may be ample reason to be disturbed.” It is natural that a devotee laments when he loses a son or when he gets physically injured, but a devotee who has *rati* knows that the body and everything related to it is anyway perishable and he patiently tolerates everything, remembering Lord Hari and knowing it all to be His wish. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī cites Emperor Parīkṣit as an example (Śrīmad Bhāgavata, 1.19.15):

taṁ mopayātaṁ pratiyantu viprā

*gaṅgā ca devī dhṛta cittam īśe
dvijopasṛṣṭaḥ kuhakas takṣako vā
daśatv alam gāyata viṣṇu gāthāḥ*

When Mahārāja Parikṣit was cursed by a *brāhmaṇa*-boy, he said: “O *brāhmaṇas*! You and the goddess Gaṅgā should know that I have given my heart to God, and that I surrendered myself to Him. May the magical trick or the snakebird of the *brāhmaṇa*-boy bite me as he likes, I do not mind! Just sing the glories of Lord Viṣṇu!” Caitanya Caritāmṛta says: *ei nava prīty aṅkura yāra citte hoy, prākṛta kṣobhe tāra kṣobha nāhi hoy* – “Those who have the fresh sprout of *prīti* (love of God) in their hearts are not agitated by material miseries.”

2) *avyartha kālatva* – The devotee does not waste his time. The devotee who has *rati* is always doing *bhajana*. He does not spend any time doing anything else but hearing, chanting and remembering the glories of God. *Kṛṣṇa sambandha vinā vyartha kāla nāhi yāya* (Caitanya Caritāmṛta). Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī quotes the *Hari Bhakti Sudhodaya*:

*vāgbhiḥ stuvanto manasā smarantas
tanvā namanto'py aniśam na tṛptāḥ
bhaktāḥ sravan netrajalāḥ samagram
āyur harer eva samarpayanti*

“The devotees always praise Lord Hari with their words, remember Him with their minds and offer Him obeisances with their bodies without ever being satiated. With tears in their eyes they offer their whole lifetime to Him.”

3) *virakti* – This means that the devotees’ eyes are naturally disinterested in the dead forms of the material world, that their tongues are naturally disinterested in its flavours, etc. *Viraktir indriyārthānām syād arocakatā svayam* (Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu). The devotee who is attached to the transcendental forms, flavours and smells of God considers the dead enjoyable object of the material world to be as disgusting as stool. *Bhukti mukti indriyārtha tāre nāhi bhāya* (Caitanya Caritāmṛta). The *Bhāgavata* (5.14.43) says:

*yo dustyajān dāra sutān suhṛd rājyaṁ hṛdi sprśaḥ
jahau yuvaiva malavad uttamaśloka lālasaḥ*

“The saintly king Bharata was so eager to obtain the lotus feet of Śrī Hari that he gave up his wife, his son, his friends and his kingdom as if they were stool, although these things are generally hard to give up and although he was still young.”

4) *māna śūnyatā* – *Utkṛṣṭatve'py amānitvaṁ kathitā māna śūnyatā* (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, 1.3.32). This means that the devotee considers himself to be very low, although he is the greatest person. The *Padma Purāṇa* states:

*harau ratim vahann eṣa narendrānām śikhāmaṇiḥ
bhikṣam aṭann aripure śvapākam api vandate*

“Although King Bhagīratha was the crownjewel of kings, he was so attached to Lord Hari that he even begged in the cities of his enemies and offered obeisances even to the outcastes.”

5) āśābandha – *Āśābandho bhagavataḥ prāpti sambhāvana dṛḍha* – “This means that one has firm hopes for attaining Śrī Kṛṣṇa.” *Kṛṣṇa kṛpā koriben dṛḍha kori jāne* (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*). Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī prays as follows:

*na prema śravaṇādi bhaktir api vā yogo'thavā vaiṣṇavo
jñānaṁ vā śubha karma vā kiyad aho sajjātir apy asti vā
hīnārthādhika sādḥaka tvayi tathāpy acchedya mūlā satī
he gopījana vallabha vyathayate hā hā mad āsaiva mām*

“O Lover of the gopīs (Kṛṣṇa)! I don't have any love for You, nor do I hear and chant or meditate on You. I do not serve the Vaiṣṇavas, nor am I fixed in divine knowledge, nor do I engage in auspicious activities, nor do I belong to the caste which is qualified to worship the deity! Still I know that You are more merciful to the fallen souls, and therefore the root of my hope for attaining You cannot be cut! I cannot give up my hope for attaining You! Alas, alas! What shall I do now?”

*āpana ayogyā dekhi mone hoy kṣobha
tathāpi tomāra guṇe upajāya lobha
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta)*

“I become disturbed when I see how unqualified I am, but still I am eager to experience Your attributes.”

6) samutkaṅṭhā – *Samutkaṅṭhā hoy sadā lālasā pradhāna* (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*). This means that one has a firm over-all desire for attaining one's beloved deity. *Samutkaṅṭhā nijābhīṣṭa lābhāya guru lubdhatā*. (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.3.36) Śrī Līlāśuka prays in his *Kṛṣṇa Karnāmṛta* (32):

*tacchaiśavaṁ tribhuvanādbhutam ity avehi
maccāpalam ca tava vā mama vādhigamyam
tat kim karomi viralam muralī vilāsi
mugdham mukhāmbujam udikṣitam īkṣanābhyām*

“O Kṛṣṇa! The sweetness of Your adolescence and Your naughtiness are astonishing all the three worlds! Only You and I know this. Tell me how can I see Your enchanting lotuslike face that is playing the flute in a lonely place?”

7) nāma gāne sadā ruciḥ – *Nāma gāne sadā ruci loy kṛṣṇa nāma* (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*). This means that one always has great taste for chanting the name of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī gives the following example:

*rodana bindu maranda syandi dṛg indīvarādya govinda
tava madhura svara kaṅṭhī gāyati nāmāvalīm bālām*

“O Govinda! This young girl (Śrī Rādhikā) sheds tears from Her blue lotuslike eyes and sings Your name with a sweet voice!”

8) āsakti tad guṇakhyāne – The devotee is always very attached to describing the Lord’s attributes. Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura sings:

*madhuram madhuram vapur asya vibhor
madhuram madhuram vadanam madhuram
madhu gandhi mṛdu smitam etad aho
madhuram madhuram madhuram madhuram
(Śrī Kṛṣṇa Karṇāmṛtam, 92)*

“Kṛṣṇa’s body is sweeter than sweet, His face is ever-so-sweet and His honeylike fragrance and His soft smile are sweet, sweet, sweeter than sweet!”

Because Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura could not find the proper words to describe the qualities of Kṛṣṇa’s sweet form, he simply repeated the word sweet again and again, and that is his sign of attachment to describing Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s qualities.

9) pritis tad vasati sthale – The devotee who has *rati* shows love for the abode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Kṛṣṇa lilāsthāne kore sarvadā vasati* (Caitanya Caritāmṛta): “He always lives in Kṛṣṇa’s playground”. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.156):

*kadāham yamunā tīre nāmāni tava kīrtayan
udvāspah puṇḍarīkākṣa racayisyāmi tāṇḍavam*

“O lotus-eyed One! When can I dance on the bank of the Yamunā, chanting Your glories with a voice choked by tears of divine love?”

When these signs are even slightly manifest in the heart and in the mind, and if external signs like tears, goosepimples and so begin to appear, then they can be justly called *sāttvika-bhāvas*, and then the sweetness of the holy name will be felt as astonishing. When the devotee anxiously chants the holy name he will be blessed with these *bhāvas* by the name’s mercy. Śrīmat Sanātana Gosvāmī has written in his *Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta* (2.3.167):

*nāmnām tu saṅkīrtanam ārti bhārān
megham vinā prāvṛṣi cātakānām
rātrau viyogāt svapate rathāngī
vargasya cakrośanavat pratīhi*

“Just as the Cātaka-birds are anxiously waiting for the clouds in the rainy season and the Cakravākas (red swans) and ospreys are pitifully lamenting at night out of separation from their husbands, in the same anxious way the devotees are chanting the *nāma-saṅkīrtana*.”

Surely those who chant in such an anxious way, while their hearts are agitated by feelings of separation, will attain *rati* or *prema*. Therefore the practising devotees must keep on practising the *nāma-kīrtana*, because that which is the nature of the perfected devotee is the practice of the practitioner. *Siddhasya lakṣaṇam yat syat*

sādhanaṁ sādhakasya tat. The practising devotee should try to chant without committing offenses. Surely the offenseless chanter will swiftly get love for the holy name and will experience the aforementioned *sāttvika* ecstasies. Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has written in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* (*Ādi-līlā*, chapter 8):

*eka kṛṣṇa nāme kore sarva pāpa nāsa
premera kāraṇa bhakti korena prakāśa
premera udoye hoy premera vikāra
sveda kampa pulakādi gadgadāśru dhāra
anāyāse bhava kṣaya kṛṣṇera sevana
eka kṛṣṇa nāmera phale pāi eto dhana
heno kṛṣṇa nāma yadi loy bahubāra
tabu yadi prema nahe nahe aśrudhāra
tabe jāni aparādha tāhāte pracura
kṛṣṇa nāma bīja tāhe nā hoy aṅkura
caitanya nityānande nāhi e sab vicāra
nāma loite prema den bohe aśrudhāra
svatantra īśvara prabhu atyanta udāra
tānre nā bhajile kabhu nā hoy nistāra*

“One name of Kṛṣṇa destroys all sins and is the cause for *prema* and devotion to appear. When *prema* arises, then its transformations like sweating, shivering, tears in the eyes, goosepimples and a faltering voice become visible. By serving Kṛṣṇa one easily gets liberated from material existence, but this whole treasure is available by saying kṛṣṇa’s name just once. When you chant that name of Kṛṣṇa many times, but still you don’t get tears of love in the eyes, then I know that you commit many offenses, so that the seed of Kṛṣṇa’s name cannot sprout. Such considerations do not exist in Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda; when you chant Their holy names tears will stream from your eyes, they give you *prema*. The Lord is completely independent and extremely magnanimous. Without worshiping Him you will never be redeemed.”

It should not be thought, though, that Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda do not consider offenses; this consideration is always made everywhere when one chants the holy name to attain *prema*. Mahāprabhu did count the offense His own mother Śacīdevī committed at the lotus feet of Śrī Advaita as an act that would bar her from attaining *prema*. It is described that when Śrī Gaura and Nityānanda descended to this planet to give *prema* even to its most degraded creatures they exhibited such compassion that even those who merely saw Them were at once freed from all their offenses and easily attained *prema*. This was described as Gaura-Nitāi’s *prakāṣa-līlā* (Their manifest, terrestrial pastimes) by Śrīla Kṛṣṇa dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī. Therefore, when we chant the holy names of Gaura-Nityānanda and remember Their splendid example we can lessen our offenses and swiftly be able to chant the holy name with love, of this there is no doubt whatsoever. We will speak more openly on this subject.

Although Śrīman Mahāprabhu was immersed in the great ocean of Śrī Rādhā's separation from Kṛṣṇa day and night, and although He Himself is the personification of the *rasa* of love-in-separation, it is the nature of *prema* that the devotee is never satiated with it. Therefore the Lord desired to decorate His body with the love-ornaments of goosepimples and a stream of tears while chanting the *nāma-kīrtana*, just to teach all the conditioned souls of the world. It is good to give an example of whatever you teach to the people of the world, therefore Śrīman Mahāprabhu gave this example to the people of the age of Kali. He was indeed the embodied example! Through education people attain knowledge, but this teaching is easier understood when one has a good example right before the eyes. Then one has gotten some direct experience.

For example, there was a young fruitseller who learned *yoga*-meditation from his *guru*. He was selling fruits the whole day and in the evening he would meditate on the Supreme Self in his heart under the guidance of his *guru*. But when he sat down in his meditation-room he would only see pictures of apples, bananas, lemons and grapes on the screen of his eyes. The minds of the conditioned souls are hard, dry and devoid of sweetness just like hard lac. Although lac is initially hard it will melt when kept above the fire, otherwise a stamped seal cannot be made with it. Similarly, when the mind of a conditioned soul melts because of its contact with the sense-objects, these sense-objects will leave their stamped seal on it, and even when one does not see the sense-objects anymore, they are still playing before the mind's eyes.

The young man told his *guru* about his problem, and the *guru* said that he should hang some apples and bananas in the room where he was meditating. When the boy closed his eyes to meditate he saw the fruits and when he opened his eyes he saw the same fruits. He kept these fruits hanging there day after day until they had rotten away. On his *guru's* order the boy looked at the rotten, stinking, disgusting fruits and thought of them. Finally he threw the rotten fruits away, cleaned his room up, and told his *guru*: "These fruits have rotten away completely! There is no other way but to hang up other fruits here." The boy's Gurudeva said: "There's no need to hang up any other fruits there anymore! As soon as the fruits were rotten and stinky, your mind was no longer agreeing to think about them!" The boy easily learned the lesson and from then on his meditation became easily accessible. If the *guru* had told his disciple that these fruits will ultimately become disgusting, so there's no need to think about them, then the boy would simply have had some *jñāna*, or theoretical knowledge, but now that he directly experienced through his eyes and his nostrils how disgusting the fruits were, he had gotten *vijñāna*, or realized knowledge.

In this way the instructions of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* and other scriptures to chant the holy name with loving symptoms such as tearfilled eyes and goosepimples, is *jñāna*, and the actual display of these amazing ecstatic symptoms by Mahāprabhu and His associates as they performed the *nāma-sankīrtana*, is an example directly seen and experienced by the practising devotees of the world, which is called

vijñāna or realized knowledge. While Mahāprabhu chanted the *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, His restless feet danced down the pathways and tears of love flowed from His eyes, sprinkling His whole beautiful body. The goosepimples on His skin resembled the blossoms of Kadamba-flowers and He relished each syllable of Kṛṣṇa’s name, which He pronounced with a stuttering voice of ecstasy, like nectar. He lifted His arms, which reached down to His knees, into the air and loudly chanted “Hari! Hari!!” while His associates surrounded Him on all sides, sweetly singing along and playing *mṛdaṅgas* (drums) and *karatālas* (hand cymbals). Their bodies were adorned with big goosebumps of ecstasy and everyone was crying streams of loving tears. The Lord looked like the personification of *nāma saṅkīrtana*! What to speak of seeing this ecstatic picture directly, even when one simply remembers this scene one becomes eager to relish the holy name with love, that’s no wonder! How surprisingly sweet the *ācāryas* are depicting this transcendental scene! The poet Rāya Śekhara sings:

*madhura madhura gaura kiśora madhura madhura nāṭa
 madhura madhura sab saḥacara madhura madhura hāṭa
 madhura madhura mṛdaṅga bājata madhura madhura tāna
 madhura madhura mātala bhakata gāoye madhura gāna
 madhura helana madhura dolana madhura madhura gati
 madhura madhura vacana sundara madhura madhura bhāti
 madhura adhara jini śaśadhara madhura madhura hāsa
 madhura ārati madhura piriti madhura madhura bhāṣa
 madhura yugala nayana rātula madhura iṅgite cāy
 madhura premera madhura vadare vañcita śekhara rāya*

“How sweet is Gaura Kiśora! How sweetly He dances! How sweet are His assembled associates! How sweetly the drums are beating and how sweet is the rhythm! How sweetly the intoxicated devotees are singing their sweet songs! How sweetly they are swinging! How sweet are their steps! How sweet are their beautiful voices and how sweet is their lustre! How sweetly their lips smile! Smiles that defeat the moonlight in sweetness! How sweet is their eagerness! How sweet is their love and how sweet are their words! How sweet are their reddish eyes with which they look so sweetly! How sweet is their love! Alas! Rāya Śekhara is deprived of all this!”

The sweet nectarean *rasa* from the wonderful cloud of *saṅkīrtana prema* always sprinkles the hearts of the practising devotees of this world and will always continue to do so. Therefore the Mahājanas say:

*śrī caitanya mukhodgīrṇāḥ hare kṛṣṇeti varṇakāḥ
 majjayanto jagat premṇi vijayante tad āhvayā*

“The sacred syllables *hare kṛṣṇa* that emanated from Śrī Caitanya’s mouth immersed the whole universe in love of God.” The Lord personally relished the sweetness of this sixth verse in the following way:

*prema dhana vinu vyartha daridra jivana
dāsa kori vetana more deho prema dhana*

“Without the treasure of *prema*, my life is poverty-stricken. Please make Me Your servant and give Me that wealth of *prema* as My salary!”

Without *prema* it is not possible to perform the *nāma-saṅkīrtana* with these ornaments of *sāttvika* transformations on the body. Although He is the ocean of *prema* Himself the Lord still prayed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa for the treasure of *prema*, because *prema* is by nature insatiable. *Prema* is the natural wealth of the living beings and without *prema* life is useless. Therefore every living being should endeavour to develop *prema*. That is the essence of the Lord’s teaching here.

verse 7

*yugāyitaṁ nimeṣeṇa
cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitaṁ
śūnyāyitaṁ jagad sarvaṁ
govinda virahaṇa me*

yugāyitaṁ - becoming an age; *nimeṣeṇa* - with a second; *cakṣuṣā* - with the eye; *prāvṛṣāyitaṁ* - becoming the rainy season; *śūnyāyitaṁ* - becoming void; *jagad* - the world; *sarvaṁ* - all; *govinda* - O Govinda!; *virahaṇa* - with separation; *me* - my.

O Govinda! Out of separation from You, the whole world appears to be void. Tears are streaming from My eyes like showers of rain and a single moment appears to Me like a millennium.

The Lord now leaves His *sādhaka*-consciousness and shows His *mahābhāva*-condition by speaking this verse. Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī depicts it as follows:

*rasāntarāveśe hoilo viyoga sphuraṇa
udvega viṣāda dainye kore pralapana*

“When the Lord entered another mood (*rasa*) He felt separation and He uttered this verse in an agitated and humble state of mind.”

The *sādhaka*-condition of the Lord disappeared and He entered into His usual mood of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's love-in-separation as He felt it while staying at Purī. The waves of agitation, lamentation, and humility, which are *sañcārī-bhāvas* in the ocean of *mahābhāva* that is in the Lord's heart, began to come up when He spoke this seventh verse.

The highest love in Vraja, especially that of the *gopīs*, is love in separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Separation is one of the reasons why the love of the *gopīs* is so great and glorious. Love has two bodies: one is called meeting and the other is called separation. If *prema* is the ingredient of separation, then everyone must accept that there is as much bliss and astonishment invested in it as in union. That's why *viraha* has been called a “*rasa*” and the Gosvāmīs have said that the taste of separation is even more astonishing than the taste of meeting. Śrīmat Sanātana Gosvāmī writes in his *Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta* (1.7.125-128):

*prāg yady api premakṛtāt priyāṇām viccheda dāvānala vegato'ntaḥ
santāpa jātena duranta śokā-veśena gāḍham bhavatīva duḥkham
tathāpi sambhoga sukhād api stutaḥ sa ko'py anirvācyatamo manoramaḥ
pramoda rāsiḥ pariṇāmato dhruvaṁ tatra sphuret tad rasikaika vedyāḥ
tac choka duḥkoparamasya paścāc cittaṁ yataḥ pūrṇatayā prasannam
samprāpta sambhoga mahā sukheṇa sampannavat tiṣṭhati sarvadaiva
icchet punas tādrśam eva bhāvaṁ kliṣṭam kathañcit tad abhāvataḥ yat
yeṣāṁ na bhātīti mate'pi teṣāṁ gāḍhopakārī smṛtīdaḥ priyāṇām*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa told Devarṣi Nārada: “O Divine sage! Although separation may at first burn severely like a forestfire in the remembrance of the beloved and may cause sorrow and pain, still this misery is ultimately the topmost ecstasy, which is even more praiseworthy than the bliss of meeting the lover. It manifests itself as an indescribable abundance of joy, because it is a transformation of transcendental love. Only the *rasikas* (transcendental connoisseurs) know this. After the misery of separation has ceased, the heart is immersed in the exquisite ecstasy of meeting the beloved. In this way, the heart and mind will always be fully pleased when one is always conscious of the beloved. The heart that is afflicted by feelings of separation will always desire to be fixed in moods of great sorrow and will be very sad if there can be no moments in which there is no eagerness and sorrow because of separation. Even those who have no taste for the sorrow of separation will consider feelings of separation to be very helpful in giving them intense remembrance of the beloved.”

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī praises the ecstasy of separation from Kṛṣṇa here as being greater than the ecstasy of meeting. He personally comments on his own words *ko'py anirvācatamo* in verse 126 as follows: *brahmānando'nirvācyas tasmād apy ādhikyena bhajanānando 'nirvācataraḥ tatra ca premānando 'nirvācyatamaḥ tatrāpi virahārti dvārā jātaḥ san param-āntyakāṣṭhā viśeṣa prāptya parama mahānirvācyatama ity arthaḥ* – “The bliss of *brahman* is called ‘indescribable’ in the Upaniṣads (with the words *yato vāco nivartanta aprāpya manasā saha*: words return

when they are sent there and it can also not be attained by the mind). The bliss of *bhajana* is attracting even the minds of the *brahmānandīs*, and is therefore called ‘more indescribable’. When *bhajanānanda* becomes very intense it is called *premānanda* and this is called ‘most indescribable’. This *premānanda* again reaches its extreme limits in the ecstasy of painful separation from one’s beloved deity and is therefore called ‘the utmost indescribable’.”

Although the pain of separation externally appears as misery, it is actually the pinnacle of transcendental bliss. Śrīpāda Sanātana Gosvāmī gives another example of this in his commentary on the abovementioned verses: *yathāgni pratiyogi ghana himādi sparśena pādādy aṅgeṣu jāyamāna parama mahā jādyasya jvalad aṅgāra sparśavad abhijña syāt. tatra hi yathāṅgāra sparśa pratītir mithyā parama mahā jādyam eva satyam. tathātrāpi duḥkhasya pratīter mithyātvam eva sukhasyaiva satyatvam vijñeyam.* “A block of ice which has been in touch with fire feels hot to the hands and feet, although it is very cold. The touch of fire is a complete imagination, actually the substance is very cold. In the same way the misery the pure devotee feels when he is separated from God is a complete imagination, it is actually the pinnacle of transcendental bliss.” Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī quotes in his *Padyāvalī*:

*saṅgama viraha vikalpe varam iha viraho na saṅgamas tasyāḥ
saṅge saiva tathaika tribhuvanam api tanmayam virahe*

Śrī Rādhikā said: “When I consider the difference between union and separation, I think that separation is better. When I am together with Kṛṣṇa I see Him only at one place, but when He is away from Me I see all the three worlds filled with Him!”

When one is separated from someone in the material world one feels just misery, only separation from Kṛṣṇa is the pinnacle of bliss. How can someone who has never cried while saying “Kṛṣṇa” know how blissful that is?

*ei prema yāra mone, tāra vikrama sei jāne,
yeno viṣāmrte ekatra milana
bahir viṣa jvālā hoy, antara ānandamoy,
kṛṣṇa premāra adbhuta carita
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā, chapter 2)*

“Only a person who has this *prema* (in his mind) can know its power. It is like the meeting of poison and nectar. Externally it burns like poison, but internally it is full of bliss. How wonderful is the nature of love for Kṛṣṇa!”

While He was at Purī, Mahāprabhu was fixed (*sthāyi-bhāva*) in Śrī Rādhā’s feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa. The Lord would show the agony that sprang forth from the depth of His heart only to the sensitive Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya, holding His arms around their necks and lamenting to them while He stayed in the Gambhīrā. How many nights and days did He spend in this way? He thought of them as His (Her) girlfriends while He clasped their necks, and said: “Sakhi! Where has My Prāṇanātha Śrī Kṛṣṇa gone, neglecting Me? What has

happened? Everywhere I see only darkness, and a moment appears like hundreds of ages to Me! *Sakhi!* Tell Me how can I spend My time in this intolerable fire of separation?” Sometimes He would look for Kṛṣṇa in the sky and sing:

*tomāra darśana vine, adhanya ei rātri dine,
ei kāla nā yāya kātāno.
tumi anāthera bandhu, apāra karuṇā sindhu,
kṛpā kori deho daraśana
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta)*

“Without You, these days and nights are miserable and the time simply won’t pass. You are the friend of the helpless, the boundless ocean of mercy! Please show Yourself to Me!”

In this verse the Lord says *yugāyitaṁ nimeṣeṇa*: “Out of separation from Govinda a moment appears to be like an age to Me”. This is a sign of *mahābhāva*. The definition of *rūḍha* (advanced) *mahābhāva* is:

*nimeṣāsahatāsanna janatā hṛd vilōḍanam
kalpa kṣaṇatvaṁ khinnatvaṁ tat saukhye’py ārti śaṅkayā
mohādy abhāve’py ātmādi sarva vismaraṇaṁ sadā
kṣaṇasya kalpatetyādyā yatra yoga viyogayoḥ*

“Whether one is in a state of separation or union, *mahābhāva* is intolerable for even a moment. It agitates the heart, it makes one experience an age to be like a moment (during union) and it makes the lover emaciated and worried about Kṛṣṇa’s happiness although He is perfectly happy. The lover always forgets everything, although he is not under the influence of (ordinary) illusion, and he considers a moment to be like an age (during separation).”

Adhirūḍha mahābhāva is even more exalted than this. When the Lord was at Purī, He relished the sweetness of the highest phase of Śrī Rādhā’s divine madness called *adhirūḍha-mahābhāva*, so all the symptoms of this *mahābhāva* were manifest in Him to the utmost.

Even in this material world we experience the miserable moments to last longer than the joyful ones. When we suffer from some very painful disease then the nights seem to last like ages. It seems as if we can not pass those nights. The burning separation from Kṛṣṇa in *mahābhāva* is so unlimited that even a split second seems to last like a long millennium. The unlimited happiness of meeting Kṛṣṇa and the unlimited sorrow of being separated from Him cannot be compared to any worldly experience. All other comparisons – a forest fire, a slowfire or the burning sensation of fresh poison – are insignificant and utterly useless. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in his *Lalita Mādhava Nāṭakam* (Act 3):

*uttāpi puṭa pākato’pi garala grāmād api kṣobhano
dambholer api duḥsahaḥ kaṭur alam hṛn magna śalyād api
tīvraḥ prauḍha visūcikā nicayato’py uccair mamāyaṁ balī
marmāny adya bhinatti gokulapater viśleṣa janmā jvaraḥ*

Śrī Rādhārāṇī told Lalitā: “Sakhi! The burning sensation of separation from the Lord of Gokula is breaking My heart! It feels hotter than *puṭa pāka* (a scale in which pigments are melted), it is more troubling than poison, more intolerable than Indra’s thunderbolt, more sharp than a spear plunged into the heart and more horrible than cholera!”

This greatly burning condition makes the slightest moment seem to be like an intolerable age for the loving devotee.

*tas taḥ kṣapaḥ preṣṭhatamena nītā
mayaiva vṛndāvana gocarena
kṣaṇārdhavad taḥ punar aṅga tāsām
hīnā mayā kalpasama vabhūvuḥ
(Śrīmad Bhāgavata, 11.12.11)*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: “O Uddhava! When I was the beloved of the *gopīs* in Vraja, they thought the nights they spent with Me went by like a flash and the nights that they were separated from Me lasted like ages!”

Then the Lord says *cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitaṁ* – “When I am separated from You tears stream from My eyes like monsoon-rains!” The same thing happens with all the loving devotees when they feel separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Their eyes are like clouds that constantly pour down torrents of rain. There is no other way for them but to cry like this to become free from the burden that weighs on their hearts, but although they constantly cry hot tears like the rains in the monsoon-season, they cannot reach the limits of their heartbreaking lamentations. Virahinī (Rādhā, Who is separated from Govinda) embraces Her girlfriends and says:

*śunalahuṁ māthura colobo murāri
calatahi pekhaluṁ nayana pasāri
pālaṭi nehārite hām raha heri
śūnahi mandire āyaluṁ pheri
dekho sakhi nilaja jīvana śeya
pīriti jānāyata aba gḥana roya
so kusumita vana kuñja kuṭira
so yamunā jala malaya samīra
so himakara heri lāgaye caṅka
kānu vine jīvana kevala kalaṅka
eto dine jānaluṁ vacanaka anta
capala prema thira jīvana duranta
tāhe ati durajana āśa ki pāśa
samvādi nā āyata govinda dāsa*

“I heard that Murārī is going to Mathurā, I have stared at Him as He left. I stood there for a moment looking and then I returned to My empty home. Look, O *sakhi*, how I maintain My shameless life! Now I am loudly crying to announce My great

love for Him! Here is the cottage in the grove in the flowergarden, here is the water of the Yamunā, here the southern winds are blowing, and here the sight of the moonlight frightens Me! Without Kṛṣṇa My life is simply a stain! All these days I knew My words would end (my days were counted). Love is capricious and a steady life is unruly. In it there are the rope-like desires of the wicked. Words do not come to Govinda Dāsa.”

No matter how much it rains in the monsoon, new clouds are coming again and again to bring more rainwater. In the same way, devotees who are separated from Kṛṣṇa simply never stop crying. The *gopīs* feel intolerable heartaches when they see the natural beauty of Kṛṣṇa’s sweet pastime-places in Vraja, because it reminds them of their bygone pastimes with Kṛṣṇa. Even plans to commit suicide are useless, because they cannot stop hoping for another meeting with Kṛṣṇa and another chance to serve Him. Another fresh cloud of separation appears in the sky of their hearts and another endless stream of tears flows from their eyes. These tears alone can keep their bodies and souls together and the springfountain of all these tears is Śrī Rādhā, the crownjewel of *gopīs*, whose mood was accepted by Mahāprabhu!

Then the Lord says: *sūnyāyitaṁ jagad sarvaṁ govinda virahaṇa me* – “O Govinda! The whole world seems empty to Me when I am separated from You!” Not any material or spiritual attainment can fill up that void other than the attainment of Govinda Himself. Any deficiency in material life can be filled up with the attainment of some insignificant enjoyment, but when a person starts missing the Greatest Thing there is, then that Greatest Thing Itself is the only thing that can fill up that void. Not even the audience of any other form of God can fill up that void, since Govinda is the embodiment of transcendental sweetness, what to speak of the attainment of some insignificant material object? Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in his *Lalita Mādhava Nāṭakam* (7.6):

*yasyottamaṣaḥ sphurati cikure keki piñcha praṇīto
hāraḥ kaṅthe viluṭhati kṛtaḥ sthūla guñjāvalibhiḥ
veṇur vaktre racayati ruciṁ hanta cetā tato me
rūpaṁ viśvottaram api harer nānyad aṅgīkaroti*

Śrī Rādhā tells Bakulā in the new Vṛndāvana-garden: “Sakhi! My heart cannot accept any other form of Hari, no matter how extraordinary, than the form whose hair is beautified by a crown made of peacockfeathers, who wears a string of big *guñjā*-beads around the neck and who keeps a flute to His beautiful mouth!”

Śrī Caitanya *Caritāmṛta* states (*Ādi-līlā*, chapter 17):

*gopikā bhāvera ei sudṛḍha niścoy-
vrajendra nandana vinā anyatra nā hoy
śyāmasundara śikhipiñcha guñja vibhūṣaṇa
gopaveśa tribhaṅgima muralī vadana
iha chāḍi kṛṣṇa yadi hoy anyākāra
gopībhāva nāhi yāy nikaṭe tāhāra*

“The mood of the *gopīs* is that they are fixed in their love for the prince of Vraja and for no-one else. If Kṛṣṇa assumes another form than His usual beautiful blackish form with the peacock feather-crown, the *guñjā*-bead decorations, the cowherders’ dress and the threefold bending form which holds the flute to the mouth, the *gopīs* will not go near Him. Such is their mood towards Him.”

For Mahāprabhu, who accepted the feelings of Śrī Rādhā, the crownjewel of all the *gopīs*, the world is void without Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Vidyāpati Ṭhākura sings:

*ab mathurā pura mādharma gelo
gokula māṇika ko hari nelō
gokule uchalalo karuṇāka rol
nayanaka jole dekho bohoye hilol
śūna bhelo mandira, śūna bhelo nagarī
śūna bhelo daśa diśa śūna bhelo sagarī
kaisane yāobo yamunā tīra
kaise nihārabo kuñja kuṭīra
sahacarī saie korolo phulavāri
kaise jīyabo ham tāhi nihāri
vidyāpati kohe – koro avadhāna
kautuke chāpi tahi rahu kāna
(Pada Kalpataru)*

“Now Mādhava has gone to Mathurā. Who has stolen the jewel of Gokula? A cry of pity is rising in Gokula and tears are flowing there in waves. The houses have become empty and the villages have become empty. The ten directions have become empty and everything has become empty. How can I go to the bank of the Yamunā now, how can I look now at the cottage in the love-grove? How can Kṛṣṇa’s girlfriends tolerate Cupid’s arrows, and how can I survive while witnessing all this? Vidyāpati says: “Watch out! Happiness is lost wherever Kṛṣṇa stays!”

When Kṛṣṇa has gone to Mathurā, Śrī Rādhā feels separation from Him (*māthura virahiṇī rāi*) and thinks that the house, the village, the ten directions, nay the whole world is empty. But then again She remembers Śrī Hari whenever She looks at anything in Vraja. The feeling of voidness becomes stronger as She remembers Śrī Hari while looking all around Her. Each object in Vṛndāvana is studded with the remembrance of Śrī Hari. Her breath is choking and it is hard for Her to stay alive, but still She must stay alive so that She can serve Kṛṣṇa. King Daśaratha committed suicide when he was separated from his son Rāmacandra, but Nanda Mahārāja could not even think of such a thing. No matter how much he suffered of separation from Kṛṣṇa, he had to stay alive. After all, how much misery would his Gopāla have to go through otherwise as an orphan? How wonderfully the beautiful girls of Vraja were serving Kṛṣṇa with their bodies! They thought that perhaps Kṛṣṇa could also not stay alive if He were to be separated from them! Śrī Kṛṣṇa sings in Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta (*Madhya-līlā*, 13.152):

priyā priya saṅga hīnā, priya priyā saṅga vinā,

*nāhi jīye e satya pramāṇa.
mora daśā śune yabe, tāra ei daśā hobe,
ei bhaye donhe rākhe prāṇa*

“When the lover is separated from the beloved and the beloved is separated from the lover, neither of them can live, that is a fact. When She (Rādhā) hears that this is My condition (that I died out of separation from Her), She will also attain that condition.” With this fear both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa keep Themselves alive.

Thus the heart burns in a slowfire, unable to stay alive because of separation, and also unable to die. In this difficult dilemma each second seems to last like an age, the eyes are like clouds that shower torrents of rain-like tears and the whole world seems to be empty. Only the devotees who actually feel this separation can know how this love is burning on the surface, but at the same time causes great ecstasy within the heart. The Lord, accepting the mood of Śrī Rādhā, is always floating in the ocean of this wonderful “suffering”.

*eimata dine dine, svarūpa rāmānanda sane,
nija bhāva korena vidita.
bāhye viṣa jvālā hoy, bhitore ānandamoy,
kṛṣṇa premāra adbhuta carita*

“In this way the Lord revealed His feelings to Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya each day. Externally He was burning from the poison of separation, but inwardly He felt blissful. How amazing is the nature of love of Kṛṣṇa!”

*ei premāra āsvādana, tapta ikṣu carvaṇa,
mukha jvale, nā yāy tyajana.
sei premā yāra mone, tāra vikrama se-i jāne,
viṣāmṛte ekatra milana.
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā, chapter 2)*

“This *prema* tastes just like boiling sugarcane juice: it burns the mouth, but still it is too sweet to resist. Anyone who has this *prema* in his mind (heart) knows it’s power. It’s like the meeting of poison and nectar in one place!”

Āpane kori āsvādane, śikhāilo bhaktagaṇa (Caitanya Caritāmṛta). The Lord tasted this sweet love-in-separation of Vraja and also expertly taught it to the devotees who surrendered to His lotus feet, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava-ācāryas. The six Gosvāmīs, headed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, also gave perfect examples of love-in-separation. That can be clearly seen in Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s prayer *Utkalikā Vallari* and Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī’s prayer *Vilāpa Kusumāñjali*. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī opens his *Utkalikā Vallari* with the following verse:

*prapadya vṛndāvana madhyam ekaḥ
krośann asāv utkalikākulātmā
udghāṭayāmi jvalataḥ kaṭhorām*

vāṣṭpasya mudrām hṛdi mudritasya

“O merciful Rādhe! O merciful Kṛṣṇa! I have taken shelter of Vṛndāvana, and I am crying there anxiously. Now I will open my heart and show You the burning marks My tears of misery have made there! You can both see now how much the heart of Your Rūpa is burning!”

A person who does not have the wealth of *bhajana* cannot possibly understand these burning feelings of separation. Ever-new waves of anxious desire to see one’s beloved deity rise on the ocean-like heart of the devotee who suffers from this separation, breaking the bondage of his patience. Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa comments as follows on the abovementioned verse: *iyam avasthā khalu bhaktajanasya puruṣārtha-dātrī* – “This condition is certainly bestowing the highest good of human life to the devotee (anxious love-in-separation).” These feelings of separation are an even greater *bhāva sampad* (wealth of emotions) than the joy of meeting the Lord. Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī has similarly revealed his pain of separation in his prayer *Vilāpa Kusumāñjali*:

*aty utkaṭena nitarām virahānalena
dandahyamāna hṛdayā kila kāpi dāsī
hā svāmīni kṣaṇam iha praṇayena gāḍham
ākṛandanena vidhurā vilapāmi padyaiḥ*

“O Svāmīni (my queen Rādhārāṇī)! I am Your miserable maidservant and I am burning in the severe fire of separation from You, anxiously crying. Now I have given up all other activities and I’m simply sitting on the bank of Śrī Rādhākuṇḍa, at the base of Govardhana Hill, lamenting out of love with these verses!”

*devi duḥkha kula sāgarodare
dūyamānam ati durgatam janam
tvam kṛpā prabala naukayādbhutam
prāpaya sva pada pañkajālayam*

“O Playful goddess! This miserable maidservant has fallen into an ocean of sorrow and feels helpless and miserable! Please take her across this ocean on the strong boat of Your mercy and bring her to the abode of Your lotus feet!”

*tvad alokana kālāhi damśair eva mṛtam janam
tvat pādābja milal lākṣā bheṣajair devi jīvaya*

“O Devi! This person has died from the bites of the black snake of separation from You. Please revive her with the medicine of the lac that has anointed Your lotus-like footsoles!”

The depth of this ocean of misery, the terrifying severeness of the snakebites and the heat of the forest fire of separation are inconceivable to ordinary people. The renunciation of the Gosvāmīs is identical with this pain separation and is a natural manifestation of it. The poet Rādhā Vallabha Dāsa describes Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī’s renunciation as follows:

*rādhā kṛṣṇa viyoge, chāḍilo sakala bhoge,
śukha rukha anna mātra sāra
gaurāṅgera viyoge, anna chāḍi dilo āge,
phala gavya korilo āhāra*

“Out of separation from Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa he gave up all enjoyment and ate only dry, stale food. Out of separation from Lord Gaurāṅga, he gave up eating grains and ate only fruits and milkproducts.”

*sanātanera adarśane, tāhā chāḍi sei dine,
kevala koroye jalapāna
rūpera viccheda yabe, jala chāḍi dilo tabe,
rādhā-kṛṣṇa boli rākhe prāṇa*

“When Sanātana Gosvāmī disappeared from earth, he gave up eating fruits and milk and drank only water, and when he became separated from Rūpa Gosvāmī, he gave up also water and kept himself alive by saying: ‘Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’.”

*śrī rūpera adarśane, na dekhi tāhāra gaṇe,
virahe vyākula hoiyā kānde
kṛṣṇa kathā ālāpana, na śuniyā śravaṇa,
uccasvare ḍāke ārtanāde*

“When Śrī Rūpa disappeared and Raghunātha Dāsa could also not see his (Rūpa’s) friends anymore, he anxiously cried out of separation. His ears could not hear talks about Kṛṣṇa anymore, he was just crying out loudly.”

*hā hā rādhā-kṛṣṇa kothā, kothā viśākhā lalitā,
kṛpā kori deho daraśana
hā caitanya mahāprabhu, hā svarūpa mora prabhu,
hā hā prabhu rūpa sanātana!
kānde gosāi rātri dine, puḍi jāy tanu mone,
kṣaṇe aṅga dhūlāya dhūsora
cakṣu andha anāhāra, āpanāra deha bhāra,
virahe hoilo jarajara*

“Day and night Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī cried: “O Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa! Where are You? O Lalitā and Viśākhā! Where are You! Please show yourselves to me! O Caitanya Mahāprabhu! O my lord Svarūpa Dāmodara! O masters Rūpa and Sanātana!” His mind and body were burning and sometimes he greyed his body by rolling in the dust. He became blind from fasting and his body felt like a heavy burden because of the intolerable misery of separation.”

*rādhākuṇḍa taṭe poḍi, saghane niḥśvāsa chāḍi,
mukhe vākya nā hoy sphuraṇa.
manda manda jihvā noḍe, prema āsru netre poḍe,
mone kṛṣṇa koroye smarāṇa.*

“He fell on the bank of Rādhākunḍa, breathing out deeply. Words could not be heard from his mouth. His tongue was vibrating slowly and tears of love trickled from his eyes as he remembered Kṛṣṇa within his mind.”

*sei raghunātha dāsa, pūrāho monera āsa,
ei mora boḍo āche sādha.
e rādhā vallabha dāsa, mone boḍo abhilāṣa,
prabhu more koro parasāda*

“May that Raghunātha Dāsa fulfill my desires! This Rādhā Vallabha dāsa has one great desire on his mind: O Lord, be merciful unto me!”

The essential thing that we can learn from the pastimes of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava-*ācāryas*, which were filled with the flavours of love-in-separation, is that some of this feeling of want, of deficiency must be awakened within the hearts and minds of the practising devotees for *Vraja-bhāva* as well. “How much deficiency of money, friends, followers, profit, adoration and distinction I feel, but I never miss my beloved deity! I am living in the same *Vraja-dhāma* that the *ācāryas* took shelter of, swimming in a terrible ocean of love-in-separation day and night, but I’m thinking to myself: ‘I have my food, my sleep, I’m having fun here, everything is all right, and in this way my hearing, chanting, remembering and worship of the deity continues in a mechanical way! I should be ashamed of myself, being in such a low condition as a *sādhaka!*’” The devotee should condemn himself in this way and repent. One should pray with an anxious heart and an anxious voice, mixed with *anurāga* for such a devotional life, feeling the absence of the Lord, by reciting the prayers of the *ācāryas*, which are most powerful.

*hari hari ! kobe mora hoibe sudina ?
phala mūla vṛndāvane, khābo divā avasāne,
bhramibo hoiyā udāsīna*

“Hari! Hari! When will that blessed day be mine? When will I wander around in Vṛndāvana completely detached, eating only some fruits and roots at the end of the day?”

*śītala yamunā jole, snāna kori kutūhole,
premāveśe ānandita hoiyā
bāhu pora bāhu tuli, vṛndāvane kuli kuli,
kṛṣṇa boli beḍābo kāndiyā*

“When will I eagerly bathe in the cool Yamunā-water in loving ecstasy? When will I wander around in Vṛndāvana, raising my arms and crying out ‘Kṛṣṇa!’ ?”

*dekhibo saṅketa sthāna, juḍābe tāpita prāṇa,
premāveśe gadāgaḍi dibo
kāhā rādhā prāṇeśvari, kāhā girivaradhāri,
kāhā nātha boliyā ḍākibo*

“I will soothe my heart by seeing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s trystingplace and I will roll around there in loving ecstasy, crying out :”O Rādhē! O Queen of my heart! O Girivaradhāri, lifter of Govardhana Hill! O Lord! Where are You?”

*mādhavī kuñjera’pori, sukhe bosī śuka sārī,
gāibek rādhā-kṛṣṇa rasa.
taru mūle bosī tāhā, śuni juḍāibe hiyā,
kobe sukhe goābo divasa*

“When I blissfully sit in a grove of Mādhavī-trees I hear the male and female parrots singing romantic songs about Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. When will I blissfully spend my days sitting at the foot of a tree, soothing my heart by hearing these beautiful songs?”

*śrī govinda śrī gopīnātha, śrīmatī rādhikā sātha,
dekhībo ratana śimhāsane.
dīna narottama dāsa, koroye durlabha āśa,
emati hoibe koto dīne*

“The fallen Narottama Dāsa has a very ambitious desire: I like to see Śrī Govinda Gopīnātha sitting on a jewelled throne with Śrīmatī Rādhikā! When will that day be mine?”

This is a sweet picture of an anxious aspirant who lives in Vraja, suffering of separation from Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. By acting according to these anxious prayers of the ācāryas, the neophyte devotees will become purified and will gradually feel that God is missing in their lives. Mahāprabhu personally gave the following summary of this śloka:

*udvege divasa nā yāy, kṣaṇa hoilo yuga sama
varṣāra megha prāya aśru varise nayana
govinda virahe śūnya hoilo tribhuvana
tuṣānale poḍe yeno nā yāy jīvana
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta)*

“Because of My agitation the day will not pass, a second appears to be like an age to Me and My eyes are like monsoonclouds that shower tears. Out of separation from Govinda the three worlds seem to be empty. I am burning in a slowfire and My life will not leave Me!”

verse 8

*āśliṣya vā padaratām pinaṣtu mām
adarśanān marma-hatām karotu vā
yathā tathā vā vidadhātu lampāṭo
mat prāṇanāthas tu sa eva nāparaḥ*

āśliṣya - embracing; *vā* - or; *padaratām* - dedicated to His feet; *pinaṣtu* - he may squeeze; *mām* - me; *adarśanāt* - from not seeing; *marma* - heart; *hatām* - pain; *karotu* - he may do; *vā* - or; *yathā tathā* - as he wishes; *vā* - or; *vidadhātu* - may arrange; *lampāṭaḥ* - womaniser, or independent Lord; *mat* - my; *prāṇa nāthah* - Lord of my life; *tu* - but; *sa* - He; *eva* - only; *na* - not; *aparaḥ* - other.

(Śrī Rādhā said:) “Kṛṣṇa may embrace this girl, who is devoted to His lotus feet, or He may break Her heart by not showing Himself to Her. He can do whatever He wants. He is, after all, an independent womaniser. But still He, and no one else, is the Lord of My life!”

When the Lord recited the previous verse, *yugāyitam nimeṣeṇa*, in the mood of *virahiṇī rāi* (Rādhā, who is separated from Kṛṣṇa), He became agitated with *sañcārī-bhāvas* (transitory moods) like envy, eagerness, humility and so on. Then, in the mood of Rādhā, He revealed His feelings to His (Her) girlfriends. Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmīpāda describes how the Lord explained this verse:

*kṛṣṇa udāsīna hoilo korite parīkṣaṇa
sakhī sob kohe - kṛṣṇe koro upekṣaṇa
eteko cintite rādhāra nirmala hṛdoy
svābhāvika premāra svabhāva korilo udoy
īṛṣyā utkañṭhā dainya prauḍhi vinoy
eto bhāva eka ṭhāi korilo udoy
eto bhāve rādhāra mana asthira hoilo
sakhīgaṇa āge prauḍhi śloka ye poḍilo
sei bhāve prabhu sei śloka uccāriilo
śloka uccārite tadrūpa āpane hoilo*

“Kṛṣṇa doesn’t care about Me anymore and He is testing Me. All My girlfriends are saying: ‘Just reject Kṛṣṇa!’”. When these thoughts came up in Rādhā’s pure heart, Her natural love for Kṛṣṇa arose. Envy, eagerness, enthusiasm and great humility – all these moods then arose simultaneously. These thoughts made Rādhā’s mind unsteady, so She spoke this elevated verse to Her girlfriends. In that mood the Lord spoke this verse and as He did so, He felt just like Śrī Rādhā.

One day Kṛṣṇa showed indifference towards Śrī Rādhā just to test Her love, and He did not go to see Her anymore. When Rādhā’s girlfriends came to tell Him how

much She was suffering because of that, He pretended not to care, although He felt great heartache when He heard it. Śrī Rādhā had become very unsteady because of being separated from Kṛṣṇa, but Her girlfriends knew very well that Kṛṣṇa was simply pretending to be indifferent to Her. Therefore they consoled Her by saying: “Rādhe! You are *premamayi* (full of love)! It is not possible for Kṛṣṇa to actually give You up! He’s only pretending, wanting to witness Your anxiety over Him! If You also showed such indifference towards Him, then He wouldn’t be able to stay calm, and He would personally come to see You!” Hearing these words of Her girlfriends, Rādhā felt Her natural desire to make Kṛṣṇa happy coming up in Her heart. The definition of this natural love was given by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī in his *Vidagdha Mādhava Nāṭakam* (5.4):

*stotraṁ yatra tatasthatām prakatayac cittasya dhatte vyathām
nindāpi pramadam prayacchati parihāsa śriyaṁ vibhrati
doṣeṇa kṣayitām guṇena gurutām kenāpy anātanvatī
preṁṇaḥ svārasikasya kasyacid iyaṁ vikrīḍati prākriyā*

“When one hears praise from the beloved, one outwardly remains neutral but feels pain within the heart. When one hears the beloved criticising, one takes it to be jokes and feels great joy. When one finds fault in the beloved they do not diminish the love, nor do the beloved’s good qualities increase it. This is how spontaneous love acts!”

Hearing these words of Her girlfriends, Śrī Rādhā’s natural feelings of love awoke and She became simultaneously eager, enthusiastic, jealous and humble, and as these feelings (or *sañcārī-bhāvas*) clashed within Her, She spoke this *āśliṣya vā padaratām*-verse to Her friends. Śrīman Mahāprabhu, who had accepted the feelings of Śrī Rādhā, also thought that His girlfriends came to console Him with their advice. As the Lord perceived the feelings of Śrī Rādhā, all these *sañcārī bhāvas* simultaneously arose in His heart, and then He recited this verse that was originally spoken by Śrī Rādhā.

There is a very deep meaning to this *āśliṣya vā padaratām*-verse, which is the Lord’s final instruction, and the explanation is very extensive. Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has personally written: *ei ślokerā hoy ati arthere vistāra, sañkṣepe kohiye - tāra nāhi pāi pāra*. “The explanation of this verse is very elaborate; I will speak it in short, because I also cannot find the limits to it.” In some editions of *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* this Bengali verse cannot be found. In this case it must be understood that the Lord personally relished the *tripadīs* (Bengali-song-explanations) that follow the Sanskrit *āśliṣya vā padaratām*-verse. And in those editions in which this verse (*ei ślokerā hoy ati arthera vistāra*) is to be found it must be understood that Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī revealed the feelings of the Lord. But anyway, whether the Lord personally relished the meanings of this verse through these *tripadīs* or Kavirāja Gosvāmīpāda revealed the Lord’s feelings, we will try to relish the explanation of this verse more extensively than the previous verses. It will be very difficult for anyone, however, to take the meaning of this verse to heart without

first hearing something about the *samarthā-rati* (competent love) or *mahābhāva* of the *gopīs*.

Prema thrives on the desire to make Kṛṣṇa happy and the deeper this desire is, the more it will make even the most subtle desire for personal happiness disappear. No one knows so well how to devote all of one's desires for the purpose of making Kṛṣṇa happy other than the *gopikās*. Their *samarthā-rati* is so intense that they forget everything else except the thoughts of how to make Kṛṣṇa happy. *Samarthā sarva vismāri gandhā sandratamā matāḥ* (*Ujjvala Nīlamanī*). This *samarthā-rati* makes the *gopīs* give up their homes, family-members, family-traditions, patience, shame and everything for the purpose of making Kṛṣṇa happy.

It is to be known here that *madhura rati* means nothing else but *sambhogecchā*, or the desire of a hero and heroine to meet each other. There are two kinds of *sambhogecchā* – (1) The desire to have one's own senses pleased by the lover, and (2) the desire to please the lover with one's senses. The first kind is named *kāma*, or lust, and the second kind is called *rati*, *prema*, or love. *Samarthā-rati* has become totally identical with this second kind of *rati*, that's why it has attained the nature of *śrī kṛṣṇānukūlya tātparya* (dedication to anything favorable to Śrī Kṛṣṇa) and *śrī kṛṣṇonmukhatā* (turning towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa). Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī states in his *Ujjvala Nīlamanī*:

*sambhogecchā viśeṣo'syaḥ rater jātu na bhidyate
ity asyām kṛṣṇa saukhyārtham eva kevalam udyamaḥ*

“*Samarthā-rati* is never separate from *sambhogecchā*. Therefore in it there is only a desire to make Kṛṣṇa happy.”

When this *samarthā-rati* increases, it reaches the stage of *mahābhāva*. *Iyam eva ratiḥ prauḍha mahābhāva daśām vrajet* (*Ujjvala Nīlamanī*). Only the beautiful girls of Vraja possess this opulence of *mahābhāva*. What to speak of other consorts, even Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā and the other Queens of Kṛṣṇa do not have it! Such is the teaching of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī in *Ujjvala Nīlamanī*:

*mukunda mahiṣī-vṛndair apy asāv ati durlabhaḥ
vraja devaika samvedyo mahābhāvākhyayocyate*

This *mahābhāva* is like the greatest nectar, bringing the mind back to its constitutional position: *varāmṛta svarūpa śrīḥ svaṁ svarūpaṁ mano nayet* (*Ujjvala Nīlamanī*). Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī comments as follows on this verse in his *Ānanda Candrikā*-commentary: *manaḥ svaṁ svarūpaṁ nayet mahā-bhāvātmakam eva manaḥ syāt mahābhāvāt pārthakyena manaso na sthitir ity arthaḥ. tena indriyānām manovṛtti rūpatvād vrajasundarīṅgām mana ādi sarvendriyānām mahābhāva-rūpatvat tat tad vyāparaiḥ sarvair eva śrī kṛṣṇasyātivaśyatvaṁ yukti siddham eva bhavet*. “The meaning of the phrase ‘the *gopīs*’ minds attain their constitutional position of *mahābhāva*’ is that their minds are composed of *mahābhāva* and other than *mahābhāva*, nothing exists in them. The senses, like the eyes, the ears etc., are all extensions of the mind; therefore the *gopīs*’ ten senses are

also composed of *mahābhāva*. All their activities are meant to give pleasure to Kṛṣṇa and therefore Kṛṣṇa is controlled by their love the most. The duty of *mahābhāva* is to make Kṛṣṇa happy, therefore the object of the *gopīs*' minds and senses is nothing else but that."

Once upon a time Droṇācārya Mahāśaya tested the skill at arms of the Kaurava-youngsters, headed by Duryodhana, and the Pāṇḍava-youngsters, headed by Arjuna, ordering them to pierce the right eye of a bird that was sitting on the branch of a tree overhead. None of the boys were able to pierce the target, except Arjuna, so Droṇācārya asked him: "O boy! How were you able to pierce this target, which was impossible to reach for the other boys, so easily?" Arjuna answered: "O Gurudeva! When I aimed at my target I first of all selected this particular tree from amongst all other trees, and after that I selected the branch where the bird was sitting from all other branches. But even then I did not release my arrow! Even when I saw only this one particular bird I did not release my arrow. Finally I aimed only at the right eye of the bird, nothing else. Only when I saw nothing else before me anymore but the bird's eye I released my arrow! By being so fixed on my aim I have become so successful!" In the same way the *Vraja-sundarīs* are exclusively fixed in giving pleasure to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

*sei gopīgaṇa madhye uttamā – rādhikā
rūpe guṇe saubhāgye preme sarvādhikā
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta)*

"Amongst the *gopīs*, *rādhikā* is supreme. Her beauty, Her qualities, Her good fortune and Her love are the greatest of all!"

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in his *Kṛṣṇa Sandarbha* (189): *tad evaṁ parama madhura premavṛttimayīṣu tāsṅv api tat sārām-śodrekamayī śrī rādhikā tasyām eva premotkarṣa parākāṣṭhāyā darśitatvāt* – "Śrī Rādhikā comes forth from the essential part of all the sweetest and most loving *gopīs* and She possesses the limit of the divine love called *mādana-mahābhāva*. The scriptures and the saints confirm this." Śrīmat Rūpa Gosvāmī gives the following definition of *mādanākhyā-mahābhāva* in his *Ujjvala Nīlamanī*:

*sarva bhāvodgamollāsī mādano'yaṁ parātparaḥ
rājate hlādinī sāro rādhāyām eva yaḥ sadā*

"The essence of God's pleasure potency is called *prema*, and the most blissful feeling of that *prema* is called *mādana*. Only in Rādhā this is always present." This *mādana-bhāva* becomes manifest when Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava are meeting.

When Śrīman Mahāprabhu was at Purī in His room called Gambhīrā, He tasted the limit of Śrī Rādhā's divine madness called *mohana-bhāva*, the feelings She had after Kṛṣṇa had left Vṛndāvana to go to Mathurā. This divine madness, or *divyonmāda*, is Rādhā's exclusive emotional treasure and it only manifests in Her after Kṛṣṇa has left Her to go to Mathurā, as is described in the pages of Śrīmad Bhāgavata. Factually Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva is the combined form of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-

Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are therefore eternally together in Him. How is it then possible for Him to experience Rādhā's divine madness after Kṛṣṇa had gone to Mathurā? This is a natural question to ask. The proper answer is that it became possible for Mahāprabhu to place the *mohana-bhāva* on the foundation of the most blissful mood *mādana-bhāva*. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī says in *Ujjvala Nīlmaṇi*:

*yoga eva bhaved eṣa vicitraḥ ko'pi mādanaḥ
yad vilāsa virājante nitya līlāḥ sahasradhā*

“The astonishing *mādana-bhāva* is manifest when Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava are united and with it They play thousands of kinds of eternal pastimes.”

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī writes in his *Ānanda Candrikā*-commentary on this verse: *yadā tu mādanākhyāḥ sthāyī svayam udayate tat kṣaṇa eva cumbanāliṅganādi sambhogānubhava madhya eva vividham viyogānubhava ity ekasminn eva prakāśa prakāśadvaya dharmānubhavaḥ sa ca vilakṣaṇa rūpa eveti*. “When the *sthāyī bhāva* called *mādana* appears itself, then Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava not only experience all the different items of lovemaking, such as kissing and embracing, but They simultaneously experience the different feelings of separation. It is a special feature of the *mādana-bhāva* that one can experience different contradictory feelings at the same time.” Therefore, although the full *mādana-rasa* is always present in Mahāprabhu, it is not impossible for Him to taste the nectar of Rādhā's divine madness out of topmost feelings of separation at the same time. Mahāprabhu is especially capable of tasting this *mohana-bhāva* placed on the foundation of the *mādana-bhāva* than Śrī Rādhārāṇī is. Anyway, Śrīman Mahāprabhu sings about these feelings of Śrī Rādhā as follows:

āmi kṛṣṇa pada dāśī, teṅho rasa sukha rāśī,
āliṅgiyā kore ātma sātha
kibā nā dena daraśana, jārena āmāra tanu mana,
tabhu teṅho mora prāṇanātha!
sakhi he! śuno mora manera niścoya!
kibā anurāga kore, kibā duḥkha diyā māre
mora prāṇeśa kṛṣṇa anya noy

“I am the maidservant of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet and Kṛṣṇa is an abundance of blissful flavours. He may take Me to Him by embracing Me, or He may corrode My body and mind. Nevertheless, He is the Lord of My life! O *sakhi*! Listen to the resolution of my mind! Whether He gives Me love or misery, the Lord of My life is Kṛṣṇa, and no one else!” (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, *Antya-līlā*, chapter 20)

When Lalitā, Viśakhā and other *sakhīs* tell Rādhārāṇī that Kṛṣṇa has lost interest in Her, Rādhārāṇī says: “*Sakhi*! I am the maidservant of kṛṣṇa's feet!” The use of the word *pada* indicates humility. It is in this mood that She speaks the entire verse *āśliṣya vā padaratām*. The duty of a maidservant is to please the Lord of her life with her service. The Lord will never be pleased when a maidservant simply aims at her own pleasure, therefore Śrīmatī Rādhikā says: “*Sakhi*! I am the maidservant

of His lotus feet! How can I ever reject Him? I should feel happy when it pleases Him to reject Me! But there's no question of Me ever rejecting Him, dear *sakhi*, because it is simply My duty to make Him happy!"

"Moreover, O *sakhi*, He is an abundance of *rasa* and bliss (the Vedas describe God as *raso vai saḥ*: He is *rasa*, and *ānandam brahma*: *brahman* is bliss). All His actions cause bliss, and if anybody becomes unhappy because of Kṛṣṇa's dealings, then that is her/his own fault! There is no question of Him giving misery to anyone, because He is bliss and relish personified!" The purport of this is that Kṛṣṇa is full transcendental bliss personified and He does not need any aid from outside to become happy. Only His transcendental pleasure potency (*hlādinī śakti*) is able to arouse desires in His heart. It is His nature to be greedy only after the taste of pure love. Śrī Rādhā is Prema Lakṣmī, the goddess of love Herself, so She is always able to arouse erotic desires in Kṛṣṇa, who is Himself erotic mellows personified. Since He is *rasika śekhara* (the king of relishers), He has no other reason to be indifferent towards Śrī Rādhā than His greed for *rasa*, or transcendental love-flavours.

So Śrīmatī says: "O *sakhi*! Kṛṣṇa, who is an abundance of bliss and *rasa*, may embrace Me or He may burn My heart, body and mind by not showing up, but He is the only Lord of My life! Since I am His maidservant, I should always be happy with whatever pleases Him! O *sakhi*, listen to My firm vow: My Prāṇavallabha Kṛṣṇa may show attachment to Me or He may give Me great misery by rejecting Me, but He is the Lord of My life and no one else!"

"O *sakhi*! I tell you what's the resolution on My mind, listen! My Prāṇaballabha Śrī Kṛṣṇa may show passionate attachment to Me or He may kill Me by making Me unhappy – He is the Lord of My life, and no one else!" Śrī Kṛṣṇa may give His love to Śrī Rādhārāṇī or may give Her lethal distress, that's why She proclaims in the next *tripadī*:

chāḍi anya nārīgaṇa, mora vaśa tanu mana,
mora saubhāgya prakāṭa koriyā
tā sabhāre dena pīḍā, āmā sane kore kṛīḍā,
sei nārīgaṇe dekhāiyā
kibā teṅho lampāṭa, śaṭha dhr̥ṣṭa sakapāṭa,
anya nārīgaṇa kori sātha
more dite manaḥ pīḍā, mora āge kore kṛīḍā,
tabhu teho mora prāṇanātha

"Sometimes He will leave the other women and come under the control of My body and mind, showing My great fortune and hurting the other women by enjoying pastimes with Me in front of their eyes. But sometimes He cheats Me without shame and goes to enjoy with the other women right before My eyes, giving Me great pain. Still, He is the Lord of My life!"

Śrīmatī says: "O dear friends! He is the lover and the Lord of many women in Vraja like Me, but still He loves Me the most, that is proven by the many pastimes

that We performed! Therefore He rejects all His other sweethearts in favor of Me, and becomes mentally as well as physically completely under My control. In this situation He reveals My good fortune by enjoying with Me in front of all the other *gopīs*, and thus gives agony to their minds. But sometimes He reveals Himself as a conniving debauchee and a bold womanizer, and then He enjoys with other *Vraja-gopīs* right in front of Me, giving Me great heartache – despite all this He is the Lord of My life!” Actually, Kṛṣṇa’s deceitfulness with the women is full of *rasa*. In his book *Prema Sampuṭa*, Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī describes that Kṛṣṇa once disguises Himself as a demigoddess and comes before Śrī Rādhārāṇī to interview Her about Her love for Kṛṣṇa. At one point Śrī Rādhā tells Him:

*lāmpatyato nava navam viṣayam prakurvann
 āsvādayann ati madoddhuratām dadhānah
 āhlādayann amṛta rasmir iva trilokim
 santāpayan pralaya sūrya ivāvabhāti
 (Prema Sampuṭa, 56)*

“*Sakhi!* This deceitfulness gives My beloved ever-fresh taste for love and He is wholly intoxicated by it. It pleases all the living beings of the three worlds with radiant beams of nectar just like the moon, but it also burns like the sun at the time of universal destruction!” This means that the hero (Kṛṣṇa) blooms up when He has ever-fresh desires for enjoying always new women, and the heroines that are separated from Him always blissfully dream of their different past and future sports with Him when He has left them to sport elsewhere. In this way everyone is immersed in an ocean of *rasa*, thinking or dreaming of the pleasures of union. Just as the moon soothes the three worlds with its cool rays, so also the state of union gives indescribable taste to the hero and the heroine. At that time they think that the three worlds are full of happiness. During separation though, this *prema* is burning even more severely than a forest fire. Nevertheless, there is an indescribable undercurrent of transcendental bliss coming from this *prema* and that is accomplishing a great increase of ecstasy during the subsequent meeting. One should know how astonishing the sweet love of the beautiful *gopīs* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Vraja* is! Then again, Śrīmatī sings:

*nā gaṇi āpana duḥkha, sabe vāñchi tāra sukha,
 tāra sukhe āmāra tātparya
 more yadi dile duḥkha, tāra hoilo mahāsukha,
 sei duḥkha mora sukha varya*

“I don’t care about My own misery, I only desire His happiness! My body, mind and senses only desire His happiness! His happiness is My purpose! If He becomes very happy by giving Me misery, then that is My greatest happiness!”

Glorifying the love of the *gopīs*, Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has written:

ātma-sukha-duḥkha gopīra nāhika vicāra

*kṛṣṇa sukha hetu ceṣṭā mano vyavahāra
kṛṣṇa lāgi āra sab kori parityāga
kṛṣṇa sukha hetu kore śuddha anurāga*

...

*tabe ye dekhiye gopīra nija dehe prīta
seho to kṛṣṇera lāgi jāniho niścita
ei deha koilu āmi kṛṣṇe samarpaṇa
tāra dhana - tāra ihā sambhoga sādhana
e deha darśana sparśe kṛṣṇa santosaṇa
ei lāgi kore dehera mārjana bhūṣaṇa
āra eka adbhuta gopī bhāvera svabhāva
buddhira gocara nahe yāhāra prabhāva
gopīgaṇa kore yabe kṛṣṇa daraśana
sukha vāñchā nāhi sukha hoy koṭi guṇa
gopikā darśane kṛṣṇera ye ānanda hoy
tāhā hoite koṭi guṇa gopī āsvādoy
tā sabhāra nāhi nija sukha anurodha
tathāpi bādāye sukha, poḍilo virodha
e virodhera ei eka dekhi samādhāna –
gopikāra sukha kṛṣṇa sukhe paryavasāna
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā, chapter 4)*

“The *gopīs* don’t distinguish between their own happiness and distress, their mental and physical endeavours are all aimed at Kṛṣṇa’s happiness. For Kṛṣṇa’s sake they give up everything, and their pure passionate love for Kṛṣṇa is only meant to make Him happy. So when you see that the *gopīs* love their own bodies then know for sure that it is for Kṛṣṇa’s sake! “I have offered this body to Kṛṣṇa, it is the wealth of His enjoyment! When Kṛṣṇa touches and sees this body He feels satisfied, and for this purpose I massage it and ornament it! There is another wonderful feature of the *gopīs*’ nature, whose prowess is inconceivable to the human intelligence: When the *gopīs* go to see Kṛṣṇa they do not desire their own happiness, but still their happiness increases millions of times. The happiness that Kṛṣṇa relishes when He sees the *gopīs* is relished millions of times more by the *gopīs* themselves. They don’t plead for their own happiness, but nevertheless their happiness always increases, that’s a contradiction. I can only see one explanation for such a contradiction, and that is that the *gopikās*’ happiness becomes complete when Kṛṣṇa is happy.”

The *gopīs* are happy when Kṛṣṇa is happy, and they are unhappy when Kṛṣṇa is unhappy. If you want to make the *gopīs* happy, then you must make Kṛṣṇa happy. They don’t have any independent feeling of happiness or distress. This feeling is most prominent in the crownjewel of *gopikās*, Śrī Rādhā. Therefore She sings:

*ye nārīke vāñche kṛṣṇa, tāra rūpe satṛṣṇa
tāre nā pāiyā kāhe hoy duḥkī*

mui tāra pāye poḍi, loiyā yāo hāthe dhari,
krīḍā korāiyā koro tāre sukhe

“When I see that Kṛṣṇa eagerly desires a certain woman and that He is unhappy because He cannot get her, I will fall down at her feet, catch her hand and bring her to Kṛṣṇa, so that He will become happy by playing lovegames with her.”

Even if Kṛṣṇa unites with other Vraja-gopīs it does not actually give Śrī Rādhā distress, rather it makes Her happy; hence She says: “Sakhi! If Kṛṣṇa is attracted to the form and qualities of another woman and He desires to unite with Her, but still that woman does not want to meet Him, then I will go to the house of that woman, fall at Her feet and convince her to go and meet Kṛṣṇa! I will take her by the hand and personally place her in Prāṇanātha Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s hand, and in this way I will make Him happy by convincing that girl to make love with Him! I will not let My Prāṇavallabha remain alive suffering the agony of not getting the woman He desires!”

These words of Śrī Rādhārāṇī brilliantly show how pure and selfless Her absolute love for Kṛṣṇa is. Kṛṣṇa is firmly bound up by the bonds of this very sweet *mahābhāva*-love and therefore Śrī Rādhā is the centre of His sensual desires. The following song describes how Kṛṣṇa fell in love with Śrī Rādhā:

*nayāna putalī rādhā mora; mana mājhe rādhikā ujora
kṣititale dekhi rādhāmoy; gaganeho rādhikā udoy
rādhāmoy bhelo tribhuvana; tabe āmi koribo kemon
kothā sei rādhikā sundarī; nā dekhi dhairaja hoite nāri
e yadunandana mone jāge; ki nā kore nava anurāge*

“Śrī Rādhā is the apple of My eye and Rādhikā shines in My heart. On the surface of the earth I see nothing but Rādhā and in the sky also Rādhikā appears. The three worlds have become full of Rādhā. Now what shall I do? Where is that beautiful Rādhikā? I cannot stay calm without seeing Her! Yadunandana Ṭhākura thinks: “What will He (Kṛṣṇa) not do out of fresh passion?”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not “a man addicted to women”. He is self-satisfied and eternally fulfilled. He is God Himself. Only pure, selfless transcendental love can arouse such intense desires as are described above in Him, and only for Śrī Rādhā’s love He becomes maddened like this. Human thoughts, words and feelings can never conceive of Śrī Rādhā’s pure sweet love.

One may then ask: If Śrī Rādhā is really willing to take another woman by the hand and bring her to Kṛṣṇa to be enjoyed by Him, then why does She become proudly jealous whenever She finds Kṛṣṇa in Her rival Candrāvalī’s bower, as is described so often in the books of the *ācāryas*? To answer this, Śrī Rādhā sings the next couplet in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*:

kāntā kṛṣṇe kore roṣa, kṛṣṇa pāy santoṣa,
sukha pāy tāḍana bhartsane

yathā yogya kore māna, kṛṣṇa tāte sukha pān,
chāde māna alapa sādhanē
sei nārī jīye kene, kṛṣṇera marma vyathā jāne,
tabhu kṛṣṇe kore gāḍha roṣa
nija sukhe māne kāj, poḍu tāra śire bāj,
kṛṣṇera mātra cāhiye santoṣa!

“When a certain *gopī* is jealously angry with Kṛṣṇa and chastises Him, then Kṛṣṇa becomes very happy and satisfied. She shows her pride suitably and that makes Kṛṣṇa happy. Then, with some endeavour, she gives up her pique. Why does a woman continue to live who knows Kṛṣṇa’s heartache, but who still continues her deep anger towards Him? She’s only interested in her own happiness! Let a thunderbolt fall on her head! We only want Kṛṣṇa’s satisfaction!”

When Rādhikā becomes jealous and angry with Kṛṣṇa for going to the love-bower of Her rival-*gopī* Candrāvalī, it is only meant to make Kṛṣṇa taste the sweetness of that jealous mood of Hers. In *Ujjvala Nīlamanī*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī gives the definition of *māna*, or a lover’s proud huff, as follows:

*dampatyor bhāva ekatra sator apy anuraktayoḥ
svābhīṣṭa śleṣa vīkṣyādi nirodhī māna ucyate*

“When the hero and the heroine are together and they are in love with each other and want to embrace each other, but there is some mood which stops them from fulfilling these desires, that is called *māna*.”

Although at first sight it seems that such an obstruction is making the hero and heroine unhappy, it results in an increase of their love. Not only an increase, it keeps their love ever-fresh. *Māna* becomes manifest to make the stream of love more pure, more powerful and more fresh. *Māna* is the best means to give that which is always relishable its ever-fresh sweetness and attractiveness. Therefore *māna* is a reviving elixir in the kingdom of love, a wonderful magic trick! When *māna* arises, the heroine’s sweetness, beauty, form and taste become fresh again for the hero. Like a bumblebee, the hero becomes eager to drink the honey from the lotuslike face of his proud and angry heroine and He prays to her to remove the deep darkness in His heart with the moonbeams of her teeth as she smiles at Him (as is depicted in the song *danta ruci kaumudī* in Śrī Jayadeva’s *Gīta Govinda*). Finally He will fall at her feet and pray *dehi pāda-pallavam udāram*: “Give Me your generous lotus feet!” The nectarean angry words of the heroine give the hero even more pleasure than the reverential hymns offered to Him by the Vedas. Kṛṣṇa declares that in the *Ādi-līlā* of *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*:

*priyā yadi māna kori koroye bhartsana
veda stuti hoite hare sei mora mana*

Śrī Rādhārāṇī says: “*Sakhi!* The anger of the proud consort is giving Kṛṣṇa unlimited joy! He is very satisfied when she chastises Him! This consort should become pleased with Him again after He has done a little effort to pacify her, but if

she stays angry with Him, although she knows about His heartache, then she's only interested in her own happiness! Let a thunderbolt then fall on her head! In other words: a hundred curses on her! Kṛṣṇa's consorts should only endeavour for Kṛṣṇa's happiness!" Śrī Rādhārāṇī only desires Kṛṣṇa's happiness, nothing else. She explains that in more detail as follows:

ye gopī mora kore roṣa, kṛṣṇera kore santoṣa,
kṛṣṇa yāre kore abhilāṣa
mui tāra ghare yāiyā, tāre sevo dāsī hoiyā,
tabe mora sukhera ullāsa.

"When a *gopī* is angry with Me, but she manages to satisfy Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa desires her, then I will go to her house and serve her like a maidservant. Then I will become very happy!"

kuṣṭhī viprera ramaṇī, pativratā śiromaṇi,
pati lāgi koilo veśyāra sevā.
sthambhilo sūryera gati, jiyāile mṛta pati,
tuṣṭa koile mukhya tina devā

"The wife of a leprotic *brāhmaṇa* was the crownjewel of dedicated wives. For the sake of her husband she served a prostitute, stopped the course of the sun, revived her dead husband and satisfied the three chief Gods (Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva)."

How can a person, who is thus absorbed in selfless feelings of love for Kṛṣṇa, think of anything else? "How will Kṛṣṇa be made happy?" Absorption in this thought is named *prema*. When a person is absorbed, how can he experience (either mentally or sensually) anything else? The *gopīs'* bodies are made for fulfilling even Kṛṣṇa's most subtle desires and Śrī Rādhārāṇī is the greatest of them, therefore She manifests the *mohana bhāva: asahya duḥkha svīkārād api tat sukha kamatā* – She will even accept intolerable suffering for the sake of His happiness. *Svabhūtair api tat saṅga tṛṣṇā mṛtyu pratiśravāt* etc. When Uddhava was about to return to Mathurā after having spent a few months with the *gopīs* and the *Vrajavāsīs* in *Vraja*, he asked Rādhārāṇī: "Rādhe! What message should I give from You to Kṛṣṇa?" Rādhārāṇī gave the following reply in Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Ujjvala Nīlamaṇi*:

syān naḥ saukhyam yad api balavad goṣṭham āpte mukunde
yady alpāpi kṣatir udayate tasya māgāt kadāpi
aprāpte'smin yad api nāgarād ārtir ugrā bhaven naḥ
sauhyaṁ tasya sphurati hṛdi cet tatra vāsam karotu

"O Uddhava! Although we would be so happy if Kṛṣṇa came back to *Vraja*, if He feels even the slightest discomfort by coming back here, then He should never come! Although we are suffering tremendously from His separation He should always live in *Mathurā*, if that is what makes Him happy!" And also, if any of the five elements of Śrīmatī's body, like earth, water or sky, gives Kṛṣṇa even the

slightest pleasure by serving Him, then She wants to make Him happy with it, although She may prefer to die.

yāhā pahuṁ aruṇa caraṇe coli yāto
tāhā tāhā dharaṇi hoiye majhu gāta
yo sarovare pahuṁ niti niti nāho
majhu aṅga salila hoi tathi māho
e sakhi viraha maraṇa niradanda
aiche milai yab gokulacanda
yo darapaṇe pahuṁ nija mukha cāho
majhu aṅga jyoti hoi tathi māho
yo vījane pahuṁ vijai gāta
majhu aṅga tāhi hoi mṛdu bāta
yāhā pahuṁ bharamai jaladhara śyāma
majhu aṅga gagana hoi tachu ṭhāma
govinda dāsa koho kāñcana gori
so rasamaya tanu tohe kiye choḍi
(Pada Kalpataru)

“Wherever My Lord places His reddish footsoles My body becomes the ground, in whichever lake My Lord bathes I make My body the water. O *sakhi*! Death is the only pacification at times of separation! But when I meet the moon of Gokula, then... In whatever mirror He wants to admire His face, I make My body the reflecting light, with whatever wind He is fanned, I will make My body that wind, and whenever I mistake a blue monsooncloud to be My Lord I will make My body the sky that He can float in. Govinda dāsa says: ‘O Kāñcana Gori! Tell Me, how can He keep His *rasa*-laden body away from you?’”

Although there is no comparison in this material world to the selfless love of the *gopīs*, Śrī Rādhārāṇī still cites the example of the leprotic *brāhmaṇa*’s most chaste wife here. This woman had dedicated her life entirely to the service of her husband. By chance, her husband became attached to some beautiful prostitute and he openly told his wife of his desires, so to fulfill her husband’s desires the wife went to the prostitute and pleased her by serving her in many ways before telling her of her husband’s desires. But the prostitute knew that the *brāhmaṇa* was suffering from leprosy, so she did not want to have intercourse with him. But when the devoted wife brought her husband to the prostitute’s house at night, the prostitute became impressed by her dedication and agreed at least to show herself to the *brāhmaṇa*. The *brāhmaṇa* was so attracted to the prostitute that he considered himself blessed simply by seeing her. The *brāhmaṇa* was lame, so the wife carried him on her shoulders to the house of the prostitute at night. On the way, they passed by Mārkaṇḍa Muni, who was performing penances by sitting on top of a stake, meditating. By chance they touched him and thus broke his meditation, so the Muni cursed the *brāhmaṇa* that he would die at sunrise.

When the dedicated wife heard that her husband was going to die at sunrise, she was stunned at the idea that her husband would die before his desires were fulfilled. She thought: “This cannot be! But the curse of the Muni will surely take its effect in time! If I am really a dedicated wife, then the sun will not be able to rise!” And indeed, the sun had to stop its course on the strength of the woman’s dedication to her husband. The three chief deities, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, understood that the universe would go to ruin if the sun would stop its course, so they told the *brāhmaṇa*’s wife: “Once your husband will have to die and the Muni’s curse will take its effect. After your husband dies, we will revive him!” The wife agreed and the *brāhmaṇa* died at sunrise. By the mercy of the three deities, the *brāhmaṇa* came back to life and because of their nectarean glances he was also freed from his leprosy and his wicked desires. If such selfless service is possible in the material world, then what to speak of the spiritual world! After this, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī sings:

kr̥ṣṇa mora jīvana, kr̥ṣṇa mora prāṇa-dhana,
 kr̥ṣṇa mora prāṇera parāna
 ḥṛdoya upore dharaṇ, sevā kori sukhī koraṇ,
 ei mora sadā rahe dhyāna

“Kṛṣṇa is My life! Kṛṣṇa is the treasure of My life! Kṛṣṇa is the life of My life! I keep Him upon My heart and make Him happy with My service. That is My constant meditation. *Sakhi!* Kṛṣṇa is dearer to Me than millions of life-airs! I am happy when Kṛṣṇa is happy, just as the body and the senses are pleased when the life-airs are pleased. There is no separate happiness for Me outside of this! I always meditate on His happiness, and His happiness is My only desire. The life-airs are existing within the heart, and I cannot possibly keep Him also within the heart, therefore let Me at least keep Him on top of My heart and always please Him there with My service – these are My constant concerns and these are My long-standing desires!”

The *mahājanas* sing in Rādhārāṇī’s words:

baṅdhu, tomāra garave, garavinī hām,
 rūpasī tomāra rūpe.
 heno mone loy, o duṭi caraṇa,
 sadā niye rākhi buke

“O friend! I am proud of Your glories and I am the form of Your form! Thinking like this I always keep Your lotus feet in My heart!”

ānera āchaye, aneka janā,
 āmāri kevala tumi
 āmāraparāṇe hoite, śata śata guṇe,
 priyatama kori māni

“Others have many to call their own, I have only You! I consider You to be hundreds of times dearer than even My own life-airs!”

*bañdhu, śisukāla hoite, māyera sohāge
sohāginī boḍo āmi
sakhīgaṇa māne, jīvana adhika,
parāṇa bañdhuyā tumi*

“O friend! From My very childhood I loved My mother more than anyone, and My girlfriends are dearer to Me than My life. (But) You are the friend of My heart of hearts!”

*āmāranayanera añjana, añgera bhūṣaṇa,
tumi se kāliyā cāndā.
jñāna dāsa kohe -kāliyā piriti,
āmāraantare antare bāñdhā*

“You are the eyeliner around My eyes and the ornaments on My body; You are that blue Kṛṣṇa-moon! Jñāna dāsa sings: My heart is bound to the love of Kāliyā (Kṛṣṇa)!”

One may ask here: “If Rādhārāṇī does not meditate on anything else but Kṛṣṇa’s service in the mood of a maidservant and is not interested in Her personal happiness, then how does She unite with Him as a lover, being a maidservant?” The answer to this is:

*mora sukha sevane, kṛṣṇera sukha saṅgame
ataeva deha den dāna.
kṛṣṇa more kānta kori, kohe tumi prāṇeśvarī,
mora hoy dāsī abhimāna*

“My happiness lies in service and Kṛṣṇa’s happiness in sexual union, therefore I give My body to Him. Kṛṣṇa thus makes Me His lover and says: ‘You are the Queen of My life!’, but still I consider Myself to be a mere maidservant.”

“O Sakhi! Although Kṛṣṇa may call Me the queen of His life, I don’t consider myself as such! I always only think that I am Kṛṣṇa’s maidservant!” It is the nature of Kṛṣṇa-prema that it gives everyone the identification of a servant. *Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā, 6.53)* states:

*kṛṣṇa premera ei eka apūrva prabhāva
guru sama laghuke korāy dāsya bhāva*

“Love for Kṛṣṇa has this wonderful power: It makes Kṛṣṇa’s superiors, equals and inferiors all accept the mood of servants.”

It is also so blissful that it makes the bliss of the non-personal *brahman* seem completely insignificant:

kṛṣṇa dāsa abhimāne ye ānanda sindhu

koṭi brahma sukha nahe tāra eka bindu (ibid.)

In this age the Original Personality of Godhead Vrajendra-nandana has accepted the lustre and the mood of Śrī Rādhā and is absorbed in the sweetness of the service-mood (as Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu). For Kṛṣṇa's pleasure Śrī Rādhārāṇī plays and unites with Him. The service gives Her more pleasure than the union. She sings:

*kānta sevā sukhapūra, saṅgama hoite sumadhura,
tāte sākṣī lakṣmī ṭhākuraṇī
nārāyaṇera hr̥de sthiti, tabu pāda sevāya mati
sevā kore dāsī abhimānī*

“The service of My lover is the abode of happiness and it is much sweeter than union with Him. That is shown also by the goddess of fortune. She is residing on Lord Nārāyaṇa's chest, but still she likes to serve His feet as if she is His maidservant.”

Actually, the *gopīs'* service to Kṛṣṇa is much sweeter than Lakṣmī-devī's service to Lord Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṅṭha, because in these human-like pastimes they consider themselves to be ordinary girls and Kṛṣṇa to be an ordinary boy. With this the beauty of human-like pastimes is accomplished. The goddess of fortune left the service of Her husband Nārāyaṇa's lotus feet and went to Vṛndāvana to perform penances to attain the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but she was not successful. After this Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī sings:

*ei rādhāra vacana, viśuddha prema lakṣaṇa,
āsvādaye śrī gaura rāya.
bhāve mana asthira, sāttvike vyāpe śarīra,
mana deha dharaṇa nā yāya*

“Lord Gaura thus tasted the words of Rādhā, which showed the symptoms of pure love. In that mood His mind was unsteady, His body was studded with *sāttvika* ecstasies, and He could not sustain His mind and body.”

*vrajera viśuddha prema, yeno jāmbunada hema,
ātma-sukhera yāhā nāhi gandha
se prema jānāite loke, prabhu koilo ei śloke,
pade koilo arthera nirbandha.*

“The love in Vraja is as pure as gold from the Jāmbu-river, and there is not a whiff of personal happiness in it. The Lord spoke this verse (*āśliṣya vā pada*) to teach this love to the world and explained its meaning also in this *pada*.”

From the words *āmi kṛṣṇa pada dāsī* until the words *sevā kore dāsī abhimāna* the words of this *tripadī* are Rādhārāṇī's own words, explaining Mahāprabhu's *āśliṣya vā padaratām*-verse. These words are completely free from all desires for personal happiness and are revealing the symptoms of pure selfless love, which aims only at Śrī Kṛṣṇa's happiness. Lord Gaurāṅga descended to earth in the mood

of Śrī Rādhā to taste and to show the pure sweet love of Rādhā and the people of Vraja, and seeing it He was stunned and speechless and became greedy after tasting even more. Because of this, nowadays Gaura-*līlā* has become the relishable subject for the devotees. One cannot understand the weight of something unless and until one puts it on the shoulders. In the same way, as soon as the viewer feels the weight of Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* he gets the bodily symptoms of *sāttvika* ecstasies like tears in the eyes, horripilations, loss of bodily colour, shiverings etc. These moods will strike the body and mind until one cannot keep them together anymore. Because Mahā-prabhu was attracted to the mood of Rādhā, He sometimes became deformed like a turtle, and sometimes the joints of His bones became disconnected.

The gold from the Jāmbu-river has no pit and it is valuable because it is genuine. In the kingdom of love personal desires can be compared to a pit. The love in Vraja has no such pit. Especially the love of the *gopīs* and, most of all the love of Rādhā, is completely pure. Mahāprabhu recited this Śikṣāṣṭakam to teach the people of the world what are the symptoms of pure love and He personally explained these verses. Śrīla Kavirāja's words at the end of the verses of instruction for the people of the world, *se prema jānāite loke*, "This *prema* He taught to people", mean that He taught *vraja-prema* to them. This *sādhana* for *Vraja-prema* is the unprecedented merciful gift of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. He himself and the Gosvāmīs headed by Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana, who took shelter of His lotus feet, told the residents of the world about the *rāgānugā-bhajana* which is saturated with the following of the *rāgātmikā-bhakti* of the residents of Vraja. *Suddha-bhakti* is of two kinds, *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā*.

*yatra rāgānavāptatvāt pravṛttir upajāyate
śāsanenaiva śāstrasya sāvaidhī bhaktir ucyate*

"Normally devotion to God is either generated by sacred greed or on the order of the scriptures. When there is no spontaneous inclination towards God one must follow the orders of the revealed scriptures. This is called *vaidhī-bhakti*." This kind of devotion is based on fear of punishment in hell or in a lower species of life for not serving God according to the strict rules outlined by the revealed scriptures.

*virājanīm abhivyaktam vrajavāsi janādiṣu
rāgātmikām anusṛtā yā sāvaidhī rāgānugocyate
(Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu, 1.2.270)*

"The devotion of the eternally perfect associates of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja is called *rāgātmikā-bhakti* and devotion that follows in its wake is called *rāgānuga-bhakti*."

There are two kinds of *rāgātmikā* associates of Kṛṣṇa, namely *sambandhātmikā* and *kāmātmikā*-associates. The eternally perfect *sambandhātmikā*-associates are Kṛṣṇa's servants like Raktaka and Patraka, His eternal friends like Śrīdāma and Subala, and His eternal parents Nanda and Yaśodā, and the *gopīs* of Vraja, headed by Śrī Rādhā, are the *kāmātmikā* associates. The devotion of the *kāmātmikā*-associates is considered to be most intimate, and this *kāmātmikā-bhakti* is again

twofold: *sambhog-ecchātmikā* and *tad bhāvecchātmikā*. The *sambhogecchātmikās* are the Lord's consorts and the *tad bhāvecchātmikās* are the girlfriends of these consorts. In this way there are two kinds of *rāgānugā-bhakti*: *sambandhānugā* and *kāmānugā*. Those devotees who follow in the footsteps of the Lord's servants, friends and parents are the *sambandhānugā*-devotees and those who follow in the footsteps of the *gopīs* are *kāmānugā*-devotees. The *mañjarī bhāva sādhanā*, which belongs to the division of *tad bhāvecchātmikā kāmānugā sakhī-bhāva* and follows in the wake of Śrī Rādhārāṇī's eternal maidservants like Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, Śrī Rati Mañjarī etc. is the great gift of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. This practice of *Vraja-rasa* was practised and preached by the Gosvāmīs, headed by Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana. This *mañjarī-bhāva* alone is proclaimed to be the pinnacle of *rāgānugā-bhajana*. This *mañjarī-bhāva* is the goal of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas who have taken shelter of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's feet.

Śrī Caitanya *Caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā*, 22.156-157) states:

bāhya antara – ihāra dui to sādhanā
bāhya – sādhaḥa dehe kore śravaṇa kīrtana
mone – nija siddha deha koriyā bhāvana
rātri dine cinte vraje kṛṣṇera sevana

“There are two kinds of transcendental devotional practices. One is external and the other is internal. The external practice consists of hearing and chanting in one's material body and the internal practice is a mental one, in which one thinks of one's perfect spiritual body with which one serves Kṛṣṇa in *Vraja* day and night.”

With one's material body the practising devotee lives in *Vraja* (in the district of *Mathurā* in the state of *Uttara Pradeśa* in *India*), or if he is unable to do that, he lives in *Vraja* mentally after at least having physically been there for some time. In the physical state he follows in the footsteps of the people of *Vraja* like Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī by following the process of hearing, chanting, and remembering the pastimes of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Within his mind he conceives of his spiritual body or a *mañjarī*-body, following in the footsteps of the people of *Vraja* like Śrīmatī Rūpa Mañjarī and others, remembering Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's *aṣṭa kālīyā līlā*, Their eternally revolving eightfold daily pastimes and mentally serving the Dual Divinities as is proper for the particular time of day. The following divine aspirations will constantly awaken within the minds and hearts of such devotees:

rādhā kṛṣṇa prāṇa mora! yugala kiśora!
jīvane maraṇe gati āra nāhi mora
kālindīra kule keli kadambēra vana
ratana vedīra upore bosābo du'jana
śyāma gaurī aṅge dibo (cuyā) candanera gandha
cāmara ḍhulābo kobe heribo mukha canda
gānthiyā mālatīra mālā dibo doṅhāra gale
adhare tuliyā dibo karpūra tāmbūle

*lalitā viśākhā ādi yoto sakhīvr̥nda
ājñāya koribo sevā caraṇāravinda
śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya prabhura dāsera anudāsa
narottama dāsa kore sevā abhilāṣa*

“O Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa! O Youthful divine Couple! You are My life! In life or in death, there is no one else for me but You! In a playforest of Kadamba-trees on the bank of the Yamunā I will seat Them on a jewelled throne. When will I anoint Their bluish and golden bodies with sandalwoodpulp, fan Them and behold Their moonlike faces? I will string garlands of Jasmine-flowers and hang them around Their necks and put betelleaves laced with camphor in Their mouths. I will serve Their lotus feet on the order of the *sakhīs* like Lalitā and Viśākhā. Narottama Dāsa, who is the servant of the servants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, desires these services.”

These aspirations fill the lives of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas! They spend their lives doing *bhajana* while holding these desires in their hearts and when they leave their material bodies they are blessed with the direct service of Śrī Śrī Gauracandra and Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava in spiritual bodies in the kingdom of Their transcendental pastimes.

jaya śrī gaurahari! jaya śrī rādhe!