



*Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-mālā*

---

A NECKLACE OF DIVINE CONCLUSIONS

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śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

# *Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-mālā*

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A NECKLACE OF DIVINE CONCLUSIONS

- ŚRĪLA BHAKTIVINODA ṬHĀKURA -



Translated from the Hindi Edition of

TRIDANḌĪ SVĀMĪ ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA  
NĀRĀYAṆA GOŚVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

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Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛita	Utkalikā-vallarī
Veṅṅu-gīta	The Rays of the Harmonist (periodical)

DEDICATED TO MY HOLY MASTER



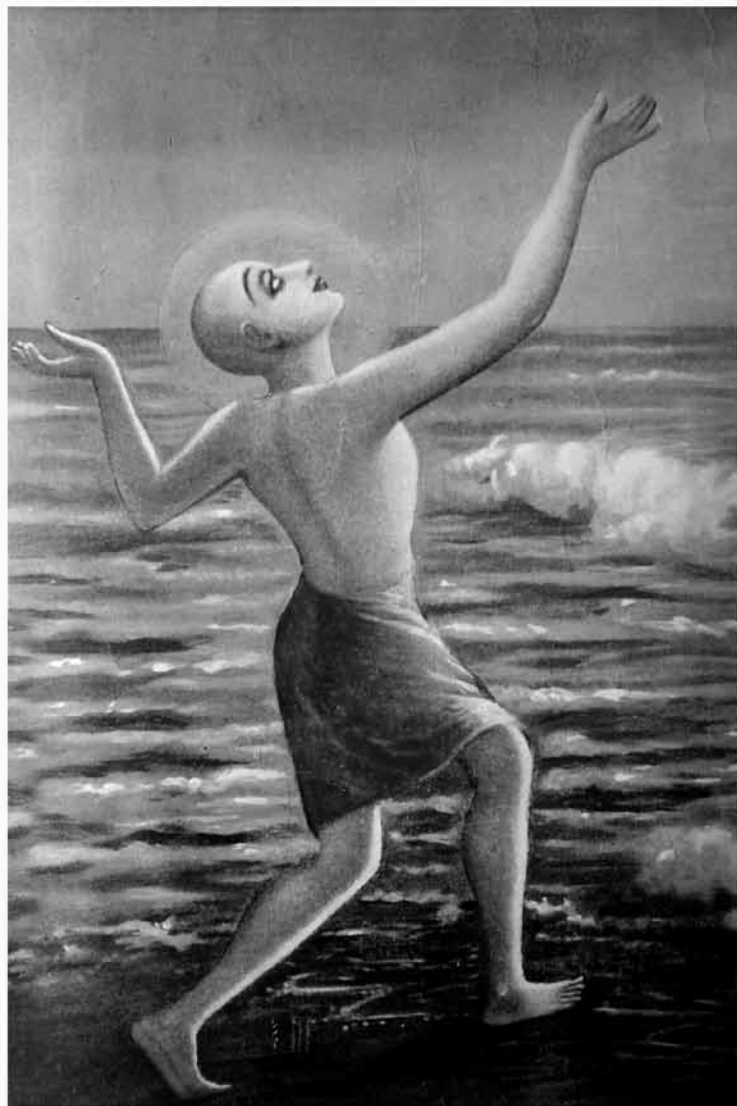
*śrī gauḍīya-vedāntācārya-keśarī  
nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata*

## **Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja**

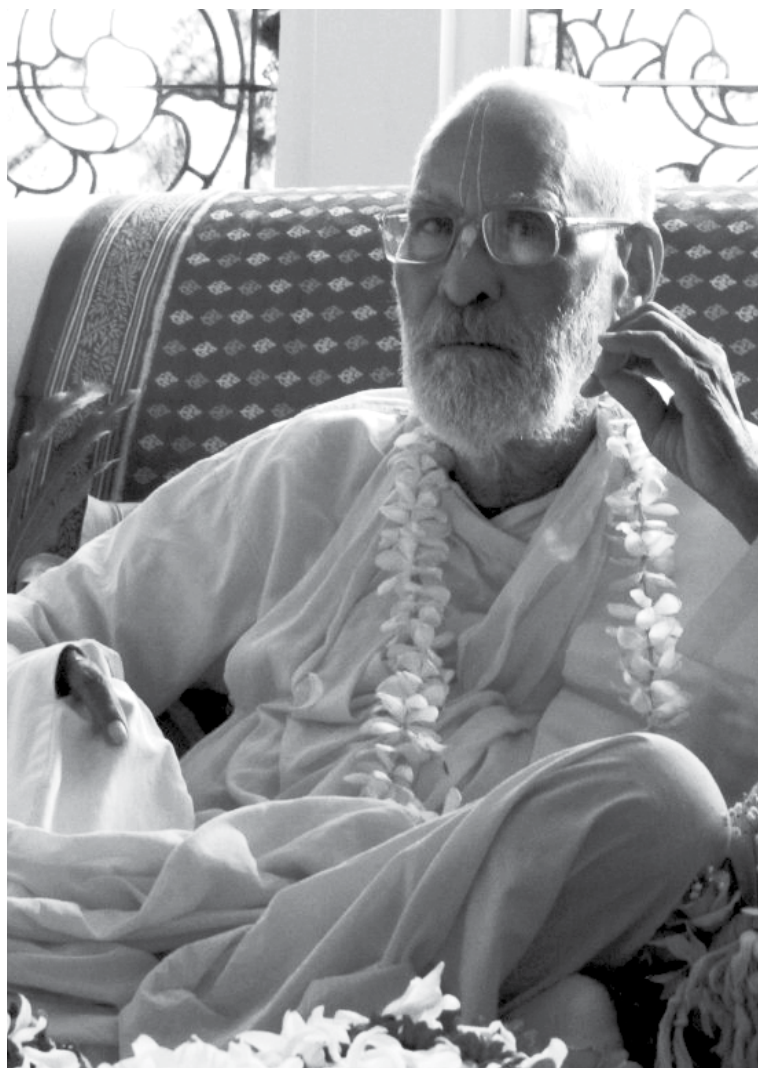
The best among the tenth generation  
of descendants in the Bhāgavata-paramparā  
from Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu,  
and the founder of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti  
and its branches throughout the world.

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ŚRĪ CAITANYA MAHĀPRABHU



ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA  
NĀRĀYAṆA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

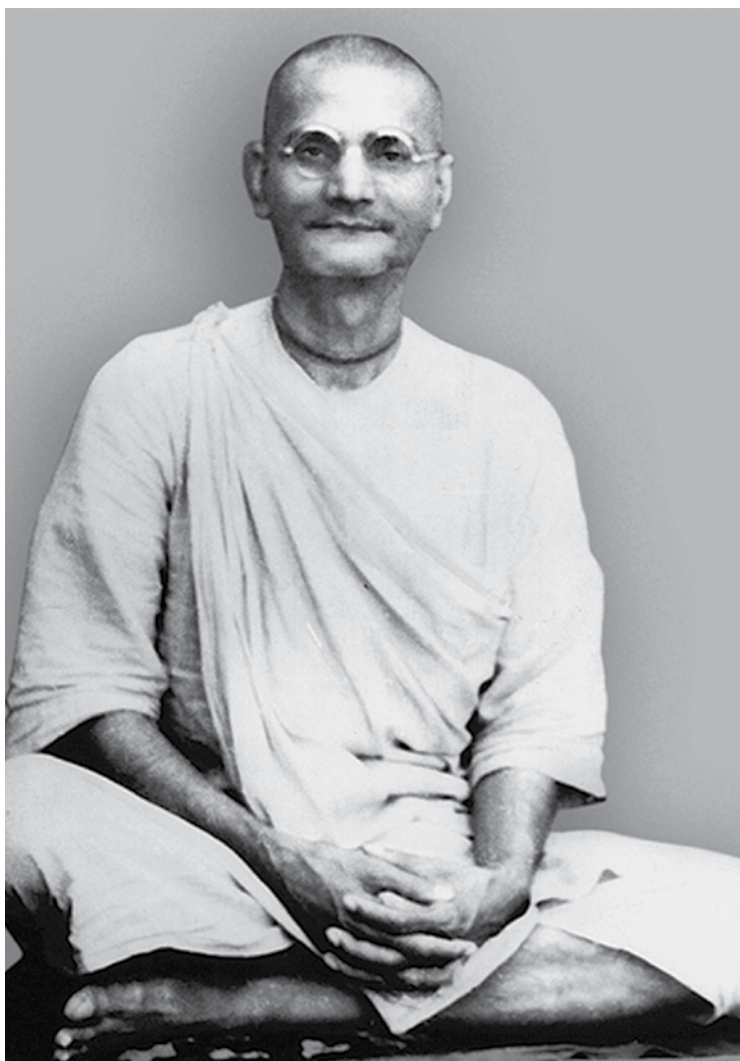




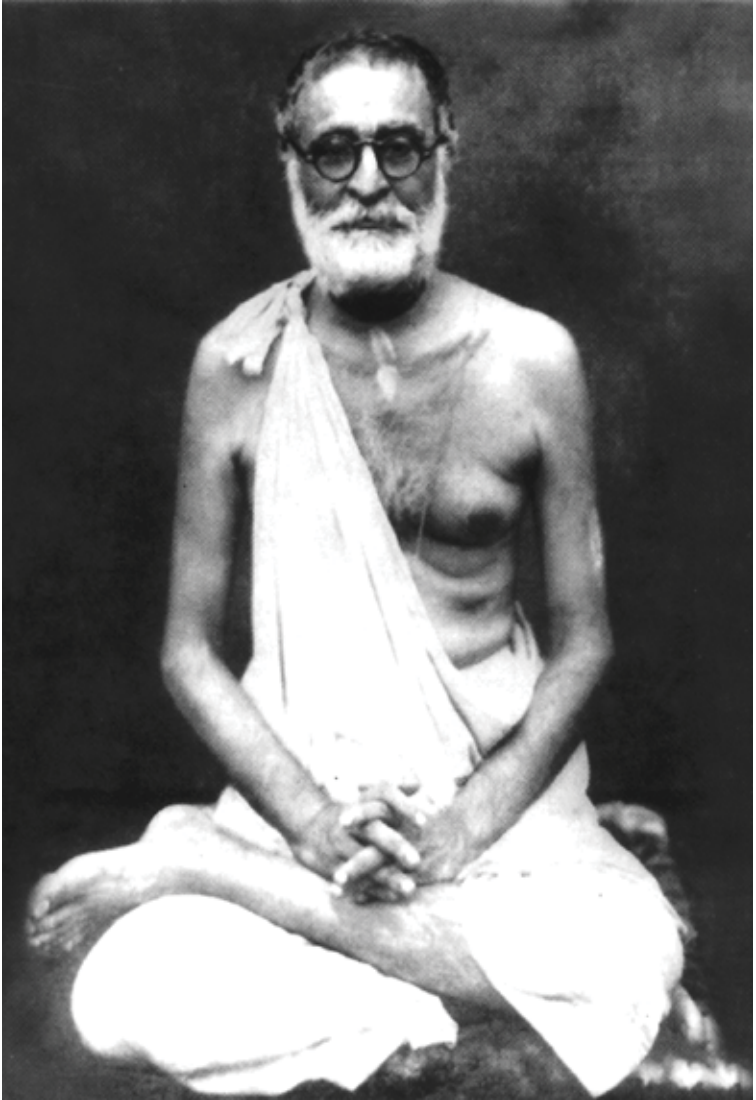
ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA  
VĀMANA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA



ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA  
SVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA



ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTI PRAJÑĀNA  
KEŚAVA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA



ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTISIDDHĀNTA  
SARASVATĪ ṬHĀKURA PRABHUPĀDA



ŚRĪLA BHAKTIVINODA ṬHĀKURA



## *Preface*

In this modern age there has been significant advancement in the development of science, engineering, medicine and economics. Simultaneously, however, the problems arising from poverty, crime, disease, and climatic irregularities are constantly increasing. Due to advancements in technology we can communicate with others throughout the world almost instantly. Despite this, as individuals, we are drifting further apart from each other, both physically and emotionally. Families are disintegrating around us, and divorce rates are soaring. Despite being offered so much facility by materialistic society, we are feeling so unfulfilled. As a fire does not decrease upon having oil poured upon it, in the same way, giving into the demands of the mind and senses will not satisfy us or give us peace, rather they will relentlessly demand more and more gratification.

Could there be a way to find happiness apart from sensual gratification? Are we nothing more than a combination of lifeless atoms? Is the goal of life nothing more than accumulation of wealth or sensual satisfaction? Such questions have arisen in the mind of mankind since time immemorial. Indeed it is this proclivity for investigation that separates us from the birds and beasts.

Indian's ancient traditions are established by the Vedas, which were originally handed down from *guru* to disciple through the process of submissive hearing. They were then compiled into a vast body of sacred literature which provides information on all aspects of knowledge, from the material aspects of our life, like health care and city planning, to the esoteric and divine aspects, such as reincarnation of the soul, meditation and the science of God realization.

In the *Vedānta-sūtra*, a sacred philosophical text, the first statement informs us, with urgency and simplicity, what is the most important question to ask in this human form of life: “*athāto brahma-jijñāsā* – Now, in this human form, it is imperative that one should inquire into the nature of the Absolute Truth.” Of course the next question arises: “From whom should I inquire?” This book, *Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-mālā*, discusses this question in depth, and also provides an answer to this most ancient of all questions. Selected verses from the Vedic literatures have been assembled here to provide the reader with a comprehensive analysis of this question, thus allowing him access to this wisdom so that he can apply it in his own life. Stated simply, this book will give the reader the proper understanding of Vedic science. Just as when milk is churned, butter automatically rises to the top of the milk pail, in the same way, the essence of this sacred tradition known as the Vedic literatures has been churned and presented to us in a systematic manner. For



the benefit of the modern reader it has been presented in this small booklet as an easy to understand introduction to this ancient system of thought. This message has risen from the expansive ocean of all varieties of knowledge, both phenomenal and spiritual, that have been expressed in the Vedas, since the beginning of time.

This small book, *Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-mālā* was composed by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (1838–1914), and published in the year 1892 from Kolkata, West Bengal, India. He engineered the renaissance of devotion in this modern age. A prolific writer, he composed hundreds of books, songs, and articles in many languages, and was a perfect example of what he preached.

Svāmī B. V. Dāmodara

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## Introduction

*Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-mālā* was originally composed in the Bengali language by the incarnation of auspiciousness upon this world, *om viṣṇupāda* Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is to be included as an intimate member among the eternal associates of Śrī Śācīnandana Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is the purifier of the age of Kali and the source of all incarnations. Now that this essay has become available to the faithful readers in the Hindi language, we are experiencing the most profound joy to serve the heart-felt desire of our most worshipful spiritual master, the lion-like *ācārya* and *jagad-guru*, *om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

After the disappearance of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* such as the six Gosvāmīs, Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Kavirāja, Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, and Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, the pure Vaiṣṇava *dharma* and true teachings, as practiced and preached by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, had become almost entirely lost. The most dear associate of Śrī Gaurasundara, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, appeared within this material world and composed a great number of books in the Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, Oriya, and English languages. For this, he became famous as the seventh Gosvāmī in the historical annals of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura manifested the *Śrī Daśa-mūla-tattva* (ten fundamental truths) from the ocean of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s teachings, thus bestowing unlimited auspiciousness upon the Vaiṣṇava world. This *Śrī Daśa-mūla-tattva* is the infallible medicine and remedial diet for the eternal disease of material existence. By this spiritually scientific process, consisting of the philosophical understanding of the stages of *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana*, all the main teachings of Śrīman Mahāprabhu have been strung together to form a necklace of Vaiṣṇava conclusions, or *siddhāntas*.

At the time when the famous *Gauḍīya-vedānta-ācārya*, Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, was composing his *Govinda Bhāṣya* commentary on the *Śrī Brahma-sūtra* (*Vedānta-sūtra*), he also wrote a book named *Prameya Ratnāvalī*, in which he summarized the philosophy of his predecessor spiritual master, Śrīman Madhvācārya. In this book one will find the philosophical presentation of the nine *prameyas* (truths) as presented by the original Supreme Person, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

*śrī-madhvaḥ prāha viṣṇuṃ paratamam akhilāmnāya-vedyaṃ ca viśvaṃ  
satyaṃ bhedañ ca jīvān hari-caraṇa-juṣas tāratamyaṃ ca teṣāṃ  
mokṣaṃ viṣṇv-aṅghri-lābhaṃ tad-amala-bhajanāṃ tasya hetuṃ pramāṇaṃ  
pratyakṣādi-trayaṃ cety upadiśati hariḥ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-candraḥ*

“Śrī Madhvācārya says: (1) Lord Viṣṇu is the Supreme Absolute Truth; (2) He is the object to be known by the study of the entire Vedas; (3) the material world is real; (4) the *jīvas* (living entities) are different from

Lord Viṣṇu; (5) the *jīvas* are by nature eternal servants of Bhagavān; (6) the *jīvas* are classified as either conditioned or liberated; (7) liberation (*mokṣa*) means the attainment of Bhagavān; (8) pure devotional service is the method to attain liberation; (9) direct perception (*pratyakṣa*), logical inference (*anumāṇa*), and Vedic authority (*śabda*) are the three sources of actual knowledge. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has instructed us in these nine philosophical conclusions of Śrī Madhvācārya.”

In this small book named *Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-mālā*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has briefly described these nine philosophical conclusions (*prameyas*) in simple, straightforward, and easily understandable language. Along with this, in the second part of this book, he has presented an authoritative and touching deliberation on the subject of the pure holy name (*śuddha hari-nāma*), the semblance of the holy name (*nāmābhāsa*), and the offensive stage of chanting (*nāmāparādha*). This is most helpful to the *sādhaka*, or practitioner of *bhakti*.

I have full conviction that for the faithful readers, and especially for the practitioners of pure devotion (*śuddha-bhakti*), this book will be like a valuable necklace.

Begging for a particle of mercy from Śrī Hari,  
 Guru and the Vaiṣṇavas,  
 Humble and insignificant,

**Tridaṇḍibhikṣu Śrī Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa**



## Chapter One

### NAVA-PRAMEYA-SIDDHĀNTA - NINE TRUTHS

**Q. What order has our supremely worshipable Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu given to us?**

A. His order is that we very carefully follow the instructions concerning the nine philosophical conclusions that Śrīman Madhvācārya passed on to us through the *guru-paramaparā* (disciplic succession).

**Q. What is the *guru-paramaparā*?**

A. The *ādi-guru* (original spiritual master) of all spiritual masters is Bhagavān Himself. He mercifully instructed Lord Brahmā, the original disciple (*ādi-kavi*), on the philosophical truths concerning Himself, the Absolute Truth. These truths were, in turn, successively taught by Brahmā to Śrī Nārada, by Nārada to Śrī Vyāsadeva, and then by Vyāsa to Śrī Madhvācārya. Such instructions received by the disciple from the spiritual master are called directives received through the disciplic succession (*guru-paramaparā-upadeśa*).

**Q. What are the nine philosophical conclusions preached by Śrī Madhvācārya ?**

A. These are the nine *tattvas*:

- (1) Bhagavān alone is the Supreme and Absolute Truth.
- (2) He is the supreme object of knowledge described throughout the entire Vedas.
- (3) The universe is real (*satya*).
- (4) The following five types of differences (*bheda*) are all true: the differences between God and the individual spirit soul (*jīva*), the differences between one soul and another soul, the differences between the soul and matter, the differences between God and matter, and the differences between matter and matter are all real.
- (5) The individual soul (*jīva*) is the eternal servant of Bhagavān, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- (6) All souls are graded differently according to their position, as either liberated or conditioned (*baddha*).
- (7) Liberation (*mokṣa*) means to attain the lotus feet of Bhagavān.
- (8) *Bhakti*, or worship of Bhagavān is the only cause of liberation.
- (9) *Pratyakṣa* (direct perception), *anumāna* (logical inference), and *śabda* (statements of the Vedic scriptures) are the three types of evidence or *pramāṇa*.



## Chapter Two

### BHAGAVĀN ALONE IS THE SUPREME TRUTH

#### Q. Who is Bhagavān, the Supreme Person?

A. Bhagavān (God) is He who manifests all the individual souls (*jīvas*) and all inert matter by dint of His own inconceivable potencies (*acintya-śakti*), and then enters within them as the Supreme Controller (*iśvara-svarūpa*). He also transcends all souls and matter in His form as Kṛṣṇa. As such, He is far beyond the reach of material intelligence. It is He who manifests His own divine, completely spiritual form composed of eternity, knowledge, and bliss (*sac-cid-ānanda svarūpa*) by dint of His Supreme potency, the *parā-śakti*. He is the object of devotion for every individual soul.

#### Q. What is the *śakti*, or potency, of Bhagavān?

A. We are unable to factually describe the Lord's potency because His *śaktis* are unlimited, whereas we have limitations. It is for this reason His potency is called *parā-śakti* [literally, the Supreme potency]. What is completely impossible for us is easily performed by this potency of the Lord. This ability or power of Bhagavān to perform that which is impossible is called His *aghāṭana-ghāṭana-paṭīyasī-śakti*. By dint of this potency, all irreconcilable

contradictions are completely, instantaneously, and simultaneously harmonised and manifest within Him.

**Q. Then is Bhagavān subordinate to this śakti?**

A. It is not that Bhagavān is one entity and that His śakti is another separate entity. Just as the burning power of fire is inseparable from the fire, similarly Bhagavān's śakti is inseparable from Him.

**Q. If Bhagavān is the one and only Supreme Truth, then why did Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu give His followers instructions about Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His śakti, or potency?**

A. Bhagavān has six eternal qualities: He possesses all opulences (*aiśvarya*), strength (*vīrya*), fame (*yaśa*), beauty (*śrī*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and renunciation (*vairāgya*). The various forms of the Lord manifest according to the degree to which these specific qualities are expressed. For example, when His quality of great opulence is prominently manifest, then this form is called the Lord of the spiritual sky, Śrī Nārāyaṇa, and when His quality of nectarean sweetness predominates, then He manifests as Vṛndāvana-Candra, the moon of Śrī Vṛndāvana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone is the topmost manifestation of Bhagavān.

**Q. How many forms does the Lord have?**

A. He has only one form. That form is fully spiritual, supremely beautiful, and attractive to all. It is overflowing with divine bliss, always engaged in activities, or *līlās*, and perceivable by pure love (*prema*). According to the different natures possessed by different souls, the Lord's eternal form manifests to them in an infinite number of ways. However, the individual souls, according to their particular nature, accept these many different manifestations of the Lord as separate individual forms. The form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the eternal blissful form, or *svarūpa*, of the Lord.

**Q. What are Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, or *līlā*?**

A. The most charming portion of the spiritual world is called Śrī Vṛndāvana. There, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is composed of eternality, knowledge, and bliss, is eternally present in the form of the Divine Couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, for the purpose of performing eternal pastimes. When the individual *jīva* souls manifest their eternal forms of divine bliss, or their eternal *svarūpa*, in the form of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's maidservants, then they attain the qualification for entering Śrī Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes within the all-spiritual abode of Śrī Vṛndāvana. Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the very personification of supreme bliss. There is not the slightest presence of either fear or death

in these pastimes. The only assistant of these activities of the Lord, or *līlā*, is unbroken spiritual bliss.

**Q. What are the obstacles to the attainment of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, or *līlā*?**

A. There are two obstacles: (1) material intelligence (*jaḍa-buddhi*) and (2) impersonalism.

**Q. What do you mean by material intelligence?**

A. Material intelligence is that which develops due to the crippling influence of material time, material place, material objects, materialistic desires, materialistic thoughts, and materialistic activities. By material intelligence, one sees the transcendental realm of Śrī Vṛndāvana to be a material place. One sees time to be divided into three parts: past, present, and future. Are perishable objects the only objects to be perceived? By material intelligence, all of one’s aspirations are directed towards hopes for impermanent happiness, such as attainment of the heavenly planets. In this condition, the soul cannot think of anything spiritual, being confined by material thoughts. Such souls imagine their ‘duty’ to be temporary activities such as the development of civilization, morality, science, industry, and the increase of material prosperity.

**Q. What is impersonalism, or *nirviṣeṣa-buddhi*?**

A. That nature by which one recognizes the distinct varieties within this world is called ‘*viṣeṣa*.’ The tendency towards impersonalism that arises when the materialistic thought process is rejected, along with its concomitant power of discrimination, is called *nirviṣeṣa-buddhi*. Such people are then unable to differentiate between objects, and they eventually think themselves as having attained emancipation (*nirvāṇa*) or having merged with the impersonal *brahma-jyoti* effulgence. In this condition there is no real happiness. Due to an absence of spiritual bliss, *prema*, pure devotional service is hidden from them. Even though the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are beyond matter, they are not devoid of variety; rather, they are full of spiritual variegation.

**Q. If the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are beyond matter, then how were they able to be seen at the end of Dvāpara-yuga?**

A. The pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are unperceivable to the material senses. However, by Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s inconceivable potency, His transcendental and non-material activities are also able to manifest within the material world. Even though Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes are manifested within this material world, they never blend with matter or become subject to the rules of matter. Whether manifest within the material world (*prakāṣa-līlā*) or within the spiritual

world (*aprakāṣa-līlā*), the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are always purely spiritual. All the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are performed in Śrī Vṛndāvana, the spiritual world. Even so, by the inconceivable potency and limitless mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, those same pastimes appear within this material world and also within the hearts of the pure *jīva* souls. Yet people with materialistic consciousness are unable to properly realize the completely spiritual nature of these pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa when they are manifested in the material world. Instead, they understand them as materialistic activities and try to analyze them with the help of mundane logic and argument. The result of this is that they are cheated, and they see so many faults within those transcendental pastimes. Whoever becomes freed from materialistic consciousness, as were Jagāi and Madhāi [greatly evil materialists who were delivered by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu], will be able to factually understand these truths. Seeing the Lord's pastimes as being completely free from any touch of material inebriety, such fortunate souls become attracted to them. Without understanding the truth about Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one cannot relish *rasa*, or the taste of service to Him.

**Q.** These truths of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are available only within the religious principles of the Vaiṣṇavas. What will be the destination of those who follow another religion?

A. The instructions available within different religions for the worship of *Īsvara* (the Supreme Controller),

Paramātmā (the localized Supersoul in the heart), or Brahman (the all-pervading impersonal feature, which is the effulgence of His body), all ultimately have Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their final goal. By gradual development, the *jīvas* will evolve and eventually attain *bhakti* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. When these partial religious paths attain completeness, they transform into *bhakti* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. For the *jīva*, supreme knowledge means expertise in *kṛṣṇa-tattva*.

## *Chapter Three*

### HE IS KNOWABLE BY ALL THE VEDAS

**Q. How can one know the truth about the Lord (*bhagavat-tattva*)?**

A. He can be known by the soul's own self-manifest innate knowledge (*svataḥ-siddha-jñāna*).

**Q. What is self-manifest knowledge (*svataḥ-siddha-jñāna*)?**

A. There are two types of knowledge: (1) self-manifest, or *svataḥ-siddha-jñāna* and (2) that which depends on the senses, or *indriya-paratantra-jñāna*. Self-manifest knowledge is that which is inherently a feature of the pure soul's original spiritual form, or *svarūpa*. It is eternal, just like all spiritual reality. This inherent self-manifest knowledge is called Veda or *āmnāya*. This pure knowledge,

or *svataḥ-siddha-jñāna*, has appeared along with the conditioned soul in the material world in the form of the Vedas, namely the *Ṛg-veda*, *Yajur-veda*, *Sāma-veda*, and *Atharva-veda*. Ordinary people collect knowledge of various objects by the help of their material senses. This is called *indriya-paratantra-jñāna*.

**Q. Can one know the truth about Bhagavān by this *indriya-paratantra-jñāna* (knowledge based on the senses) or not?**

A. No. Bhagavān, the Supreme Person, is beyond the scope of all the material senses. For this reason, He is known as Adhokṣaja. The knowledge acquired from the senses, as well as material speculation and logic generated from the mind with the help of the senses, always remains very far from giving a true conception of Bhagavān.

**Q. If Bhagavān is attained through the soul's own self-manifested knowledge (*svataḥ-siddha-jñāna*), then what is the necessity of studying the Vedic scriptures?**

A. It is true that the Veda is present in every pure spirit soul in the form of *svataḥ-siddha-jñāna*. However, that self-manifest Vedic knowledge awakens in the heart in proportion to the soul's freedom from bondage. It is manifest completely in some, and present in a covered form within others. In order to make that *svataḥ-siddha-*



*jñāna* available to everyone, the Vedas have appeared in this world.

**Q.** We have heard that Bhagavān is perceivable only through *bhakti* (devotional service). If this is true, then how can we say that He is perceivable by *jñāna* (*svataḥ-siddha-jñāna*)?

A. This *svataḥ-siddha-jñāna* is another name for devotion (*bhakti*). It is not different from devotion. Some refer to realization of the Absolute Truth as *jñāna*, while others call it *bhakti*.

**Q.** Then why is *jñāna* so condemned in the devotional scriptures?

A. The devotional scriptures have greatly glorified *svataḥ-siddha-jñāna*, because there is no other means for the *jīva* to attain freedom from inauspiciousness. The *jīva* cannot attain actual benefit by *indriya-paraatantra-jñāna* (that knowledge which depends on the senses) or *nirviśeṣa-jñāna* (knowledge of the impersonal feature of the absolute truth). Thus, both these types of knowledge have been decried in the devotional scriptures.

**Q.** Throughout all the Vedic scriptures there are descriptions of *karma* (fruitive activities), *jñāna* (speculative knowledge), and *bhakti* (devotional

service). By which of these can the *tattva* (truth) of Bhagavān be known?

A. By thoroughly examining all the statements of the Vedas, it is clearly seen that apart from Bhagavān, there is nothing else worth knowing. All *karma* (fruitive activities) mentioned in the Vedas ultimately have Bhagavān as their goal. In its completely purified state—free from the duality of material enjoyment and impersonalism—*jñāna* (speculative knowledge) also has Bhagavān as its ultimate goal. *Bhakti* (devotional service) is natural and perpetual service to Bhagavān. Therefore, Bhagavān is the object of knowledge throughout the Vedas.

## Chapter Four

### THE UNIVERSE IS REAL

**Q.** Some people say, “This universe is false—it is only instigated by the illusionary material energy (*māyā*)!” What is the real truth?

A. This universe is real, but perishable. The two adjectives ‘real’ and ‘eternal’ have different meanings. The material universe is not eternal, because it will eventually be destroyed according to the Lord’s desire. This universe is a factual reality; it is not false. Sometimes the scriptures say that this universe is false, but it is to be understood that this statement merely refers to its perishability.

**Q.** What is *māyā*?

A. Bhagavān's one Supreme Potency, the *parā-śakti*, is composed of an infinite variety of potencies. Among all of these, we have knowledge about three in particular: (1) *cit-śakti* (the spiritual potency); (2) *jīva-śakti* (the potency that produces the individual spirit souls); and (3) *māyā-śakti* (the illusionary potency). From His *cit* potency, the Lord manifests His own forms, and He reveals Himself to others. From His *jīva* potency, the Lord manifests a limitless number of tiny atomic particles of consciousness, the individual souls. Whatever manifests from His *māyā*, or illusionary potency, is perishable; however, it is real during the time it is manifest.

## *Chapter Five*

### DIFFERENCE (BHEDA) IS REAL

**Q.** Since both Bhagavān and the *jīvas* are described as being conscious (*caitanya*), is the difference between them imaginary?

A. No. Bhagavān's consciousness is unlimited and all-pervading (*vibhu-caitanya*), while the *jīva*'s consciousness is infinitesimal and localized (*anu-caitanya*). This difference between them is not imaginary, but factual. Bhagavān is the Controller of His own *māyā-śakti*, whereas the *jīvas* are subordinate to the illusionary potency named *māyā*.

**Q. How many types of *bheda* (difference) are there?**

A. There are two types of *bheda*: *vyavahārika* (functional) and *tāttvika* (philosophical).

**Q. What is *vyavahārika-bheda*, or functional difference?**

A. This is when two objects are different in terms of their function, but not different in terms of their origin. There is a difference between a clay pot and a piece of cloth, as they are used for different purposes. However, they both originate from the same thing—namely, the soil of the earth—and in their original condition as soil, there is no difference between them. This type of difference is thus called *vyavahārika-bheda*.

**Q. What is *tāttvika-bheda*?**

A. This is when two objects are different in terms of both their function as well as their original cause. This type of difference is called *tāttvika-bheda*.

**Q. Is the difference between the individual soul (*jīva*) and Bhagavān *vyavahārika* or *tāttvika*?**

A. *Tāttvika*.

**Q. Why is that?**

A. That is because in no condition whatsoever can the *jīva* become Bhagavān.

**Q. Then how are we to understand the profound statements (*mahā-vākyas*) of the scriptures like *tat-tvam-asi* (you are that)?**

A. The great sage Śvetaketu was given the following instructions: “*tat-tvam-asi* (you are that); you are *jīva*, the eternal spirit soul; and you are not born from matter, but from consciousness (*caitanya*).” It should never be understood from this lesson that the *jīva* is the supreme all-pervading consciousness (*vibhu-caitanya*). To conclude thus is an error.

**Q. Then are the scriptural statements regarding the non-difference of the *jīva* and the Lord improper?**

A. When seen from the *jīva*'s point of view, the difference between the two is eternal, but from Bhagavān's point of view, the non-difference is eternal. Therefore, the difference (*bheda*) and non-difference (*abheda*) between the individual soul and the Lord are both simultaneously eternal and true.

**Q. How can we understand this mutually contradictory conclusion?**

A. By the Lord's inconceivable potency (*acintya-śakti*), all contradictory truths can be perfectly reconciled and exist in complete harmony. However, the tiny *jīvas*, who possess very limited intelligence, think that such things are impossible.

**Q. Then why do we hear condemnation of the philosophy of non-difference (*abheda-vāda*)?**

A. The proponents of monism only accept the non-difference of the Lord and the individual soul as eternal, and they believe the quality of difference to be temporary. Śrī Madhvācārya established the quality of difference as eternal. Thus, there is no fault at all in the theory of *acintya-bhedābheda* (simultaneous oneness and difference between Bhagavān and the *jīva* soul). In fact, there is fault within both the philosophies of exclusive monism and exclusive dualism because one is inclined towards the side of duality and does not accept the non-difference between the Lord and the individual soul, and the other is partial towards non-difference and does not accept the eternal truth of duality.

**Q. Who subscribes to the philosophy of *kevala-abheda-vāda*, or complete and absolute non-difference?**

A. The monists, or *nirviṣeṣa-vādis* (propounders of eternal non-distinction), accept only the philosophy of non-difference, or *abheda-vāda*. In contrast, the *saviṣeṣa-vādis* (propounders of eternal distinction) do not accept this philosophy of exclusive monism.

**Q. Who accepts the philosophy of eternal distinction (*saviṣeṣa-vāda*)?**

A. This is the philosophy accepted by all the devotional Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*.

**Q. How many *sampradāyas* (lineages) do the Vaiṣṇavas have?**

A. There are four Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*, each of them following one of these four philosophies: *dvaita* (pure dualism); *viśiṣṭādvaita* (qualified monism); *dvaitādvaita*, (naturally occurring oneness and difference); and *śuddhādvaita* (purified monism).

**Q. What are the differences among these four ideologies?**

A. There are no actual differences among their doctrines, for they are all *saviṣeṣa-vādis* (believers in eternal distinction). None of them accept the theory of absolute monism, or *kevala-abheda-vāda*. They are all dedicated to Bhagavān, and they all accept the Lord's potencies. Those of the *dvaita* school (pure dualism) have shown the eternal

differences between Bhagavān and the *jīva*. They say that those proponents of pure non-distinction (*kevalādvaita*) are totally blind. This is the opinion of Śrī Madhvācārya. The followers of *viśiṣṭādvaita* (qualified monism) say that all things are endowed with attributes and therefore can never be said to be devoid of distinction. This is the philosophy of Śrī Rāmānujācārya. The proponents of *dvaitādvaita* (natural occurring oneness and difference) clearly refute the impersonal philosophy of pure monism. This is the philosophy established by Śrī Nimbāditya Ācārya. The doctrine of *śuddhādvaita* (purified monism) of Śrī Viṣṇu Swami also condemns the purely monistic conception presented by the impersonalists and describes the eternal attributes of the Supreme Truth, and has proven this philosophy with evidence from the scriptures. Upon thoroughly studying these four philosophies, one is unable to see any real difference among them.

**Q. Then why did Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu accept only the doctrine of Śrī Madhvācārya?**

A. The special characteristic of Madhvā's doctrine is that of all of these philosophies, it most conclusively defeats illusion in the form of the monistic *ādvaita* philosophy. By taking shelter of the theory of Śrī Madhvācārya, the distress caused by the impersonal philosophy is thrown very far away. Therefore, in order to bring about unambiguous auspiciousness for enfeebled mankind, Śrī Caitanya



Mahāprabhu accepted the doctrine of Śrī Madhvācārya. Yet we must never think that the other three Vaiṣṇava doctrines are in any way inferior or rejectable. Whatever way one accepts *saviśeṣa-vāda* (the philosophy of eternal distinction) is fine, for it will certainly bring eternal auspiciousness for the soul.

## Chapter Six

### THE SOUL IS THE SERVANT OF ŚRĪ HARI

**Q. What is the natural, eternal constitutional position (*nitya-dharma*) of the spirit soul?**

A. The *nitya-dharma* of the *jīva* is service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

**Q. What is diametrically opposed to that natural state of the soul (*vi-dharma*)?**

A. *Vi-dharma* is the state experienced when the *jīva* accepts the monistic philosophy and searches for *nirvāṇa*, or when the soul endeavours for material pleasure or proficiency.

**Q. Why do you call these things unnatural?**

A. The *jīva* is spiritual, and its nature is also spiritual. That nature is love or bliss. To completely extinguish one's existence (*nirvāṇa*) is the main goal of impersonalism,

and there is no bliss in this. In experiencing materialistic pleasure, there must be a diminishment of the variegated spiritual happiness experienced by the soul. Both impersonalism and materialism are unnatural and opposed to the real nature of the spirit soul.

**Q. Who searches after materialistic happiness?**

A. Only those who are attached to material sense enjoyment endeavour on the path of *karma* to attain the enjoyment of the heavenly planets and other sensual pleasures.

**Q. Who searches for material proficiency?**

A. Those *yogis* who have achieved perfection in the path of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* (eight-fold *yoga* process) and *ṣaḍaṅga-yoga* (six-fold *yoga* process) search for material proficiency through the attainment of mystic powers.

**Q. What will remain for the soul if both materialistic happiness and impersonal *nirvāṇa* are considered worthless?**

A. What remains is the blissful nature of the self. These two previously mentioned types of happiness are merely artificial impositions upon the soul. The realization of the soul's natural blissful essence is not a material imposition.

**Q. What is genuine happiness?**

A. Real happiness is the pure state of the spirit soul, free from any relationship with matter and in this pure state there is a cultivation of the soul's inherent devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is the blissful nature of the soul.

## *Chapter Seven*

### DIFFERENT GRADES OF SOULS

**Q. Are all souls of one type or are there different gradations amongst them?**

A. There are different gradations amongst the *jīvas*.

**Q. How many gradations are there?**

A. There are two: those who have realized the truth about their natural eternal form (*svarūpa-gata*), and those still identifying with their material coverings (*upādhi-gata*).

**Q. What are the material coverings of the soul?**

A. Because the living entities are opposed to the service of Kṛṣṇa, the deluding potency (*māyā*) covers their eternal spiritual form. This illusionary covering is the soul's material designation or *upādhi*.

**Q. Why do all souls not remain in their true position, free from material designations?**

A. Those souls who accept nothing other than service to Kṛṣṇa as their eternal occupation, and who do not give up their constitutional position, are always free from matter, and are eternally inclined towards the favourable service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. On the other hand, those who think that material enjoyment is their real self-interest and who thereby forget Kṛṣṇa, are bound in this prison house formed by the illusionary material energy, *māyā*.

**Q. Kṛṣṇa can do anything. If He could protect the living entity from this unfortunate misconception, that would have been very good. Why hasn't He done so?**

A. In this regard, it may be said that if the individual spirit souls had no independence, then they would be inert and unconscious like matter. They could not attain the bliss of independence that is inherent within conscious entities.

**Q. What is the *svarūpa*, or eternal nature, of the individual soul?**

A. The soul is a spiritually conscious entity, and his nature is blissfulness.

**Q. How many gradations are there among souls situated in their natural, eternal position (*svarūpa*)?**

A. In the spiritual world, there are five types of eternal relationships, or *rasas*, with Kṛṣṇa, and there are gradations amongst the souls within those *rasas*.

**Q. What are the five different *rasas*?**

A. Neutrality (*śānta*), servitude (*dāsyā*), friendship (*sakhya*), paternity (*vātsalya*), and conjugal affection (*śṛṅgāra*).

**Q. Please explain these five in more detail.**

A. (1) Attachment to Kṛṣṇa devoid of a close personal relationship with Him is called *śānta-rati*; (2) attachment to Kṛṣṇa that has a personal relationship, but which consists of a mood of awe and reverence is called *dāsyā-rati*; (3) attachment to Kṛṣṇa which has a personal relationship, but which is devoid of awe and reverence and is full of intimate friendship is called *sakhya-rati*; (4) attachment to Kṛṣṇa which has a personal relationship and is full of a mood of parental caring and affection is called *vātsalya-rati*; and (5) attachment, or *rati*, to Kṛṣṇa characterized by conjugal attraction to His beauty is called *śṛṅgāra-rati*.

**Q. What is the difference between *rati* and *rasa*?**

A. When *rati* is nourished by the combination of these four supporting ingredients: (1) *vibhāva* (supporting characters and specific stimulants), (2) *anubhāva* (thirteen resultant ecstatic bodily actions), (3) *sāttvika-bhāva* (eight ecstatic bodily symptoms), and (4) *vyabhicārī-bhāva* (thirty-three transitory ecstatic emotions), then eternally perfect *rasa* awakens. *Rasa* is the manifestation of the top-most bliss.

**Q. How many gradations are there amongst the materially covered souls?**

A. There are three basic types: (1) *jīvas* with covered consciousness (*ācchādita-cetana*), like trees and plants; (2) *jīvas* with shrunken consciousness (*saṅkucita-cetana*), like animals and birds; and (3) *jīvas* with budding consciousness (*mukulita-cetana*), like humans bereft of devotion.

**Q. How many types of materially conditioned or spiritually liberated *jīvas* are there?**

A. There are three basic types: (1) *nitya-mukta*, or eternally liberated, souls who are transcendental to matter; (2) *baddha-mukta* (literally, were bound but are now liberated) or those who live in the material world but are not influenced by it; and (3) *nitya-baddha*, or perpetually conditioned, souls who are completely entangled in material existence.

**Q. Of these, which type of soul is classified as *nitya-baddha* (eternally conditioned)?**

A. The souls possessing covered consciousness, shrunken consciousness, and budding consciousness are considered to be *nitya-baddha*, or eternally conditioned.

**Q. How many types of souls are there that were conditioned by *māyā*, but have since achieved liberation (*baddha-mukta*)?**

A. There are two types: (1) those with blossoming consciousness (*vikasita-cetana*), like practicing devotees (*sādhana-bhaktas*) and (2) those with fully flowering consciousness (*pūrṇa-vikasita-cetana*), like devotees who have attained the stage of preliminary love of God (*bhāva-bhakti*).

**Q. Where do the souls who are *nitya-baddha* (eternally conditioned) and *baddha-mukta* (those who were bound but have attained liberation) reside?**

A. They live in the illusionary material world.

**Q. Where do the souls who are *nitya-mukta* (eternally liberated) reside?**

A. In the spiritual world of *Vaikuṅṭha* (the place of no anxiety).

**Q. How many types of *mukulita-cetana jīvas* (those possessed of budding consciousness) are there?**

A. There are many types, but they can be roughly classified into six general categories: (1) uncivilized tribes of ignorant people; (2) civilized races which have developed materialistic knowledge and science, and place emphasis on industrialized production of material goods, but which do not possess proper moral conduct, nor do they have actual faith in God (these are the characteristics of the *mlecchas*, or meat-eating races); (3) races which have no belief in a personal God, but which are very developed in terms of morality, like the Buddhists; (4) races whose ethics are endowed with a philosophical basis and have faith in a speculative conception of God, just like the proponents of good works, the *karma-vādīs*; (5) races which accept the Lord, but do not perform devotional service unto Him; and (6) races which are fond of *nirviśeṣa-vāda* (the doctrine of impersonalism) and who are proponents of the theory of speculative knowledge (*jñāna*).

**Q. What are the different gradations amongst the living entities?**

A. From those entities possessed of covered-consciousness up to those with budding-consciousness, they are all classified according to the degree of their engagement in the principles of devotional service unto the Lord (*bhakti*). Among those with blossoming-consciousness



(the devotees of the Lord) and those with fully-flowering-consciousness (the pure devotees), the comparative levels are obvious.

## *Chapter Eight*

### REAL LIBERATION

#### IS THE ATTAINMENT OF KṚṢṆA’S LOTUS FEET

**Q. How many different types of liberation (*mokṣa*) are there?**

A. It is said that there are five types of liberation: (1) *sālokya*, or attaining the same planet as the Lord; (2) *sārṣṭi*, or achieving divine opulences similar to the Lord’s; (3) *sāmīpya*, or attaining residence near the Lord; (4) *sārūpya*, or obtaining bodily features similar to the Lord’s; and (5) *sāyujya*, or merging into the Lord’s impersonal effulgence.

Of these, *sāyujya-nirvāṇa*, which is total annihilation of the self, or the attainment of complete oneness with the Supreme, is a mistaken concoction found within the philosophy of *nirviśeṣa-vāda* (impersonalism). Such liberation should not be desired by the *jīva* souls. Upon considering the matter from the point of view of the impersonal Brahman, the liberation of merging is a type of perfection, but it is not proper for the *jīvas*. When the truth of simultaneous oneness and difference (*bhedābheda*) is properly understood, then the philosophy of absolute

monism, which completely negates all differences between the *jīva* and Bhagavān, becomes untenable.

**Q. Then what is actual liberation?**

A. Actual liberation is to attain the shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with our pure spiritual form.

**Q. Why is the attainment of the shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa accepted as liberation?**

A. Attaining the shelter of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet and becoming freed from any relationship with matter occur simultaneously. If one takes even the slightest shelter of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, then one receives the fruit of liberation. The happiness of drinking the nectar of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the eternal result. Therefore, what else could possibly be called liberation?

**Q. Please illustrate this by an example.**

A. The lighting of a lamp and the dispelling of darkness occur simultaneously. In this example, the darkness represents the principle of impersonal liberation, and the lamplight represents the nectar of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The light of the lamp is eternal, while the dispelling of the darkness is not, as it exists only for a particular moment, whereas the illumination of the light is eternal.

## Chapter Nine

### THE PURE WORSHIP OF KṚṢṆA IS THE CAUSE OF LIBERATION

**Q. How can one get liberation in the form of attaining the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa?**

A. One can attain liberation in the form of attaining the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa only by pure devotional service (*bhakti*).

**Q. What is pure devotional service?**

A. The service, devoid of any material contamination, performed by a soul bound by *māyā*, purely to become favourably inclined towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is called pure devotional service, or *vimala-kṛṣṇa-bhajana*.

**Q. What are the impurities that should be avoided in devotional service to Kṛṣṇa?**

A. The three impurities are the desire for material sense gratification, the desire for impersonal liberation, and the desire for mystic powers.

**Q. What are the desires for material sense gratification?**

A. There are three kinds: the desire for the enjoyment of worldly sensual pleasures, the desire for the enjoyment of attaining the heavenly material planets in the next life, and the desire for the peace that comes from dry renunciation.

**Q. How will one maintain the body if one gives up the objects of the senses, religious principles that bring happiness in the next life, and renunciation? How will this benefit the world? How will this relieve one of the troubles that arise due to attachment for matter?**

A. One should not reject the objects of the senses or religious principles meant for the welfare of the world or renunciation that brings about peace; rather, one should abandon the attachment for and the desire to enjoy the objects of the senses.

**Q. How can that be possible?**

A. As long as one is following the system of *varṇāśrama-dharma* (the institution dividing society into four divisions of social life and four occupational divisions), one should continue following all the bodily, mental, and social duties that are necessary according to that system. One should perform all these activities in such a way as to directly assist one's cultivation of devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

One should not act in such a way as to create an obstacle to one's cultivation of pure service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In whatever situation one finds oneself, one should always nourish the tendency to engage in devotion by performing activities directly dedicated to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. By doing so, all of one's material activities, religious activities, and renunciation will lead one to ultimate perfection.

**Q. When material duties are very different from spiritual reality, how will performing them nourish one's eternal spiritual nature?**

A. The secret is to engage all the activities of the senses, all materialistic knowledge, and all material relationships in connection to the devotional service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. One should engage all of one's senses in the service of the sacred Deity form of the Lord, honour the remnants of food offered to Him (*prasādam*), and continuously describe His wonderful qualities. One should also smell the sandalwood-smearing Tulasī leaves that have been offered to the feet of Kṛṣṇa, hear and speak about His pastimes, be in contact with people and things that are related to Him, take his darshan in the temple, and in this way increase one's attachment to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As one gradually dedicates all activities to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one's duties will not interfere with these activities, but rather assist in the attainment of spiritual perfection, or the state of *bhāva*.

**Q.** If I perform materialistic activities (*karma*) for the maintenance of the body, as well as eliminate all material desires, then will the attainment of *samādhi* by the process of *jñāna* help me in my practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness or not?

A. No, because material attachment (*rāga*) is related to the sense-objects. By *yama*, *niyama* (regulated practices of the *yoga* process), and *pratyāhāra* (withdrawing the mind from worldly attractions), one remains unable to restrict the natural relationship between the senses and their objects. Until the senses find something superior to material enjoyment, they will remain unable to abandon their previous attachment. If there is something present before you that is superior, then your flow of attachment can rush toward it, and you can very easily give up the attachment to any former object of enjoyment. Therefore, only the process that we previously mentioned constitutes *amala-kṛṣṇa-bhajana* (untainted devotion to Kṛṣṇa).

**Q.** Then what do you call *samala-kṛṣṇa-bhajana* (impure worship of Kṛṣṇa)?

A. The worship of Kṛṣṇa that is performed by one who maintains the mentality of fruitive materialistic gain, one who endeavours in *yoga* practice, or one who desires impersonal liberation is called *mala* (tainted with impurities). By such devotion one cannot attain true

liberation in the form of shelter at Śrī Kṛṣṇa's nectar-filled lotus feet.

**Q. Please summarize the regulations concerning untainted worship of Kṛṣṇa.**

A. Whatever sinless and proper actions one performs to maintain the material body during one's journey through life, which are done to assist devotion, are known as secondary devotion, or *gauṇī-bhakti*. Whenever one gets a chance, one should engage in direct devotional service.

**Q. How many types of direct devotional service are there?**

A. There are nine types: (1) *śravaṇa* (hearing); (2) *kīrtana* (chanting); (3) *kṛṣṇa-śravaṇa* (remembering Kṛṣṇa); (4) *pāda-sevana* (serving His lotus feet); (5) *arcanā* (deity worship); (6) *vandana* (offering prayers); (7) *dāsya* (becoming His servant); (8) *sakhyā* (becoming His friend); and (9) *ātma-nivedana* (complete surrender).

**Q. What will be the result of performing these practices?**

A. You will experience an awakening of *bhāva*, and then *prema*.

**Q. What is *prema*?**

A. It cannot be explained with words; it is a divinely spiritual *rasa* [the nectarean taste experienced from one's relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa]. You should make endeavours to taste it yourself, and then you can realize it.

**Q. What things should we remain careful of during the practicing stage of devotion?**

A. One should remain careful of *vikarma* (sinful activities), *akarma* (inaction), and *karma-jadāta* (inertia caused by *karma*); dry or improper renunciation; dry knowledge; and offences.

**Q. How many types of sinful activity (*vikarma*) are there, and what are they?**

A. There are many types of *vikarma*. The following are some of the more grievous sins: (1) envy; (2) harshness; (3) cruelty; (4) act of violence toward any living creature; (5) lust for the wives of others; (6) anger; (7) greed for the possessions of others; (8) selfishness; (9) falsity; (10) disrespect; (11) pride; (12) mental delusion; (13) impurity; (14) vandalism; and (15) causing offence to others.



**Q. What is *akarma*?**

A. Atheism, ingratitude, and absence of service to great souls.

**Q. What is *karma*?**

A. *Karma* refers to performing pious activities. There are many types of pious activities, and these are the most prominent ones: (1) helping others; (2) serving one's superiors; (3) charity; (4) producing progeny; (5) truthfulness; (6) purity or cleanliness; (7) simplicity; (8) forgiveness; (9) mercy; (10) working according to one's own qualification; (11) appropriate renunciation; and (12) neutrality.

**Q. What is *karma-jaḍatā*, or material inertia?**

A. *Karma-jaḍatā*, or material inertia, occurs when material acquisitions or happiness gained from pious activities make the mind complacent; one thinks 'this is enough' and turns away from endeavouring for spiritual advancement.

**Q. What is dry or improper renunciation?**

A. Renunciation that comes from one's own endeavour or practice is known as *śuṣka-vairagya*, or dry renunciation, but renunciation that automatically manifests due to

the development of *bhakti* is called *yukta-vairagya*, or appropriate renunciation.

**Q. What is dry knowledge?**

A. It is that knowledge which has no relationship with spiritual reality, or *cit-tattva*.

**Q. How many types of offences (*aparādha*) are there?**

A. There are two types of offences: *sevāparādha* (offences committed during the performance of devotional service), and *nāmāparādha* (offences committed towards the holy names of the Lord).

**Q. How can one's devotional practices become pure?**

A. One's *bhajana* becomes pure by remaining within this world in an unattached manner, and after having received pure knowledge, engaging in hearing and chanting in the association of saintly devotees (*sādhu-saṅga*).

## Chapter Ten

THREE EVIDENCES - SPIRITUAL SOUND OR SCRIPTURE  
(ŚABDA), DIRECT SENSE PERCEPTION (PRATYAKṢA),  
AND LOGICAL INFERENCE (ANUMĀNA)

**Q. What is evidence (*pramāṇa*)?**

A. *Pramāṇa* is that by which the truth is ascertained.

**Q. How many types of *pramāṇa* are there?**

A. There are three types.

**Q. What are they?**

A. Spiritual sound or scripture (*śabda*), direct sense perception (*pratyakṣa*), and logical inference (*anumāna*).

**Q. What is *śabda-pramāṇa*, or spiritual sound?**

A. All the self-manifest Vedic scriptures, which are the very incarnations of perfect knowledge, are *śabda-pramāṇa*, or evidence in the form of spiritual sound. They constitute the best evidence, because without such a form of evidence, it is not possible to attain knowledge of truth that is beyond matter.

**Q. Why can't the Lord and the spiritual world be observed by direct sense perception (*pratyakṣa-pramāṇa*) and logic (*anumāna-pramāṇa*)?**

A. All knowledge gathered by direct sense perception is called *pratyakṣa-pramāṇa*, and the conclusions deduced by such means are called *anumāna-pramāṇa*. Both of these can give only material knowledge.

**Q. If this is so, then why do we accept the processes of direct perception and logic in ascertaining the truth of the Supreme?**

A. Both direct senses perception (*pratyakṣa-pramāṇa*) and logic (*anumāna-pramāṇa*) are somewhat effective means with which to confirm the perfect truth determined by *śabda-pramāṇa*. Thus, when both these forms of evidence act in a subordinate position to *śabda-pramāṇa*, they can also be counted as a means of *pramāṇa*.





# Śrī Hari-nāma

BY ŚRĪLA BHAKTIVINODA ṬHĀKURA

The ocean of material existence is very difficult to cross without the mercy of the Lord. It is not only difficult, but impossible. Even though the *jīvas* are superior to matter, they are by nature weak and dependent on Bhagavān as their sole protector, guardian, and savior. The individual *jīva* soul is *aṅu-caitanya*, an atomic conscious being. He is dependent on and is the servant of the Supreme Conscious Being, or Parama-Caitanya Bhagavān. In other words, Parama-Caitanya Bhagavān is the shelter for all *jīvas*. This world of matter is created by the illusionary potency called *māyā*. Therefore, the position of the *jīva* is the same as that of an offender who is in prison. The *jīva* wanders throughout the material creation as a result of his opposition to Bhagavān. Those *jīvas* who are opposed to Bhagavān are called *baddha-jīvas* (conditioned souls) because they are chained by *māyā*, whereas those *jīvas* who follow Bhagavān are released from *māyā* and are called *mukta-jīvas* (liberated souls). This difference is due to the variegated conditions in which the unlimited *jīvas* are situated. Hence, there are two divisions of souls, *baddha-jīvas* and *mukta-jīvas*.

By performing appropriate spiritual practices (*sādhana*), the conditioned *baddha-jīva* attains the mercy of Bhagavān and thus becomes capable of breaking the powerful chains of illusion, or *māyā*. After lengthy contemplation, our great saintly persons have established three types of spiritual practice, or *sādhana*: fruitive actions (*karma*), speculative knowledge (*jñāna*), and devotion (*bhakti*).

Following the social system of prescribed work known as *varṇāśrama-dharma*, as well as performing austerities (*tapasya*), fire sacrifices (*yajña*), charity (*dāna*), vows (*vrata*), and *yoga* are mentioned in the scriptures as limbs of *karma* and their results are clearly described. By deeply understanding the distinct nature of these results, the primary effects of executing *karma* are revealed. They are: (1) sense enjoyment on the earthly planets; (2) sense enjoyment in the heavenly planets; (3) relief from disease; and (4) the chance to perform some great activity. If we separate the fourth effect—performance of great activity—from the other three, it seems that the results of enjoying the heavenly planets, enjoying the earthly planets, and curing disease, which the *jīva* acquires by performing *karma*, are all perishable. They will be destroyed by Śrī Bhagavān’s wheel of time. It is not possible to become free from the bondage of illusion (*māyā*) by attaining these results. On the contrary, their attainment will only increase the desire to execute more *karma*, and this will



lead to further bondage. The opportunity to perform a great activity also goes in vain if one does not use it.

In this regard, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.8) states:

*dharmah svanuṣṭhitah puṁsām  
viṣvaksena-kathāsu yah  
notpādayed yadi ratim  
śrama eva hi kevalam*

“The main purpose of *varṇāśrama-dharma* is to simplify the life of a person who is performing his natural occupational duty, so that he has sufficient time to hear *hari-kathā*. However, if an attraction for hearing *hari-kathā* is not developed within him, then all the religious activities he performs in accordance with *varṇāśrama-dharma* will be so much useless labor.”

Thus, I have explained how the ocean of material existence cannot be crossed with the help of *karma*. *Jñāna*, or speculative knowledge, is also considered a practice by which a higher goal is achieved. The result of *jñāna* is *ātma-śuddhi* (purification of the coverings of the soul). The *ātmā* (soul) is beyond matter, but when it forgets this reality and takes shelter of matter, it becomes lost on the path of *karma*. *Karma* is a term used to describe work, or activity prescribed in the Vedas for the attainment of material benefits.

By discussing the principles of *jñāna*, a person can come to the conclusion that he is not composed of matter, but is a transcendental, spiritual being. This type of *jñāna* is generally called *naiṣkarmya* (self-realization). In the stage of *naiṣkarmya*, the *jīva* is only able to relish a limited amount of bliss (*ānanda*). This stage is also called *ātmārāmata* (in which one finds pleasure in the self alone). But when the *jīva* begins to realize his eternal nature, and starts to relish his relationship with Kṛṣṇa, he transcends the stage of *naiṣkarmya*. For this reason, the saintly Nārada has stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.12):

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

“Although *jñāna* may be free from all material affiliation, it is not pleasing to the heart if it is devoid of a conception of service to the infallible Supreme Lord.”

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.7.10) also mentions:

*ātmārāmās ca munayo  
nirgranthā apy urukrame  
kurvanty ahaitukīm bhaktim  
ittham-bhūta-guṇo hariḥ*

“Śrī Hari possesses an astonishing quality: He attracts all varieties of persons, including those who are self-satisfied (*ātmārāma*) and free from all material contaminations, to engage in service to Him.”

Therefore, *jñāna* and *karma* can only be called limbs of *sādhana* when *karma* leads to the performance of increasingly elevated pious action, and when *jñāna* transcends the stage of *naiṣkarmya*. This performance of good *karma* and the rejection of impersonal *jñāna* will lead us to the practice of devotion (*bhakti-sādhana*). In and of themselves, *jñāna* and *karma* are not accepted as limbs of *sādhana* except when they lead us to *bhakti*. It is then that they have some significance. Therefore, only *bhakti* is called *sādhana*. When *karma* and *jñāna* lead us to *bhakti*, they are considered as a *sādhana*. Otherwise, *bhakti*, by its nature, is the very form of *sādhana* itself.

The decision of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.14.20) clearly explains this:

*na sādhayati mām yogo  
na sāṅkhyam dharmā uddhava  
na svādhyāyas tapas tyāgo  
yathā bhaktir mamorjitā*

“Uddhava! *Karma-yoga*, *sāṅkhya-yoga*, or *varṇāśrama-dharma* cannot please Me, nor can the study of the Vedas, austerity, or renunciation. Only the performance of pure *bhakti* actually pleases Me.”

Performing *bhakti* is the only way to please Bhagavān. There is no other means. There are nine kinds of *sādhana-bhakti*: *śravaṇa* (hearing), *kīrtana* (chanting), *smaraṇa*

(remembering), *arcanā* (worshipping), *vandana* (praying), *pāda-sevanam* (offering obeisances), *dāśya* (serving), *sakhya* (engaging in friendship), and *ātmā-nivedana* (fully surrendering). *Śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, and *smaraṇa* are the primary limbs of *sādhana*. Their *sādhya*, or object, should be Śrī Bhagavān’s name (*nāma*), form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*), and pastimes (*līlā*). And of these four, *hari-nāma* is the original seed. Thus, according to the scriptures, *hari-nāma* is the root of all worship:

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

(Śrī-Bṛhan-Nāradya-Purāna 3.8.126)

“In Kali-yuga, there is no deliverance for the *jīva* except by the chanting of *hari-nāma*.”

By the word *kalau*, it is to be understood that although there was never a time when *śrī hari-nāma* was not the sole means for deliverance, still, in the present age of Kali, when the various other *mantras* and practices have become weak, it is especially appropriate to take shelter of the all-powerful name of Śrī Hari.

In relation to *hari-nāma*, the *Śrī Padma-Purāṇa* states:

*nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇas  
 caitanya-rasa-vidyāḥ  
 pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto  
 ’bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ*

“The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is a transcendental wish-fulfilling gem (*cintāmaṇi*), for there is no difference between Kṛṣṇa’s name (*nāma*) and Kṛṣṇa Himself (*nāmī*). In other words, the holy name is the bestower of the supreme goal of life. This name of Kṛṣṇa is the very form of transcendental mellows (*caitanya-rasa-svarūpa*). It is completely pure; that is, it is unlimited and eternally liberated, devoid of any connection with *māyā*.”

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in his commentary on the above verse:

*ekam eva sac-cid-ānanda-rasādi-rūpam  
 tattvam dvidhāvīrbhūtam ity arthaḥ*

“*Śrī-kṛṣṇa-tattva* is the non-dual form of eternity, knowledge, and bliss.” He has appeared in two forms: (1) *nāmī*, the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself and (2) *nāma*, the form of His own name.”

The essence of this is that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *sarva-śaktimān*, the possessor of all potencies. All the manifestations of the Supreme Person are the manifestations of His potency or *śakti*. Although dependent on the Supreme

Person, *śakti* alone can reveal His transcendental form to others. By depending on Her, Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental form can be perceived, and by impregnating Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s name with Her infinite power, She makes it famous everywhere. Thus, *kṛṣṇa-nāma* is a wish-fulfilling spiritual gem or touchstone (*cintāmaṇi-svarūpa*). It is Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself (*kṛṣṇa-svarūpa*), and the embodiment of supreme consciousness and transcendental mellows (*caitanya-rasa-svarūpa*). Just by chanting Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s name, *kṛṣṇa-rasa* rises spontaneously in the core of the heart. The holy name is complete in itself and does not depend on the construction of the words present in the *mantras*, [according to the rules of Sanskrit grammar, suffixes and prefixes are added to a name to effect a particular meaning] where the names are somewhat altered e.g. *kṛṣṇāya* for Kṛṣṇa or *nārāyaṇāya* for Lord Nārāyaṇa. Whenever anyone on the spiritual platform utters the name of Kṛṣṇa, the bliss of transcendental mellows begins to arise. *Nāma* is always transcendental and fully conscious—not lifeless like material syllables. *Nāma* is only the mellow of transcendental consciousness (*caitanya-rasa*). *Nāma* is ever liberated. It cannot be produced by the material tongue. Only a person who has tasted the mellow of *nāma* can understand this explanation. One who imagines that *nāma* is lifeless is not eligible to relish *caitanya-rasa*, nor is he satisfied with this explanation.

One may argue that *nāma*, which we continuously chant, is dependent on material syllables, so how can it

be said that *nāma* is not a material object and is eternally liberated? Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī responds to this adverse opinion as follows:

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi  
na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ  
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau  
svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*

(Śrī-Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu,  
Eastern Division 2/234)

“The material senses can perceive a material object. *Kṛṣṇa-nāma* is transcendental; therefore, it can never be perceived by the material senses. The *nāma* that initially manifests on the tongue is only a result of a *sphūrti*—a pulsating of the transcendental senses of the soul. However, at the time that the soul’s transcendental (*apṛākṛta*) tongue utters *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, the *parama-tattva* appears in person upon the material tongue and begins to dance. As the transcendental mellows of devotion (*apṛākṛta-rasa*) pervade the senses, the devotee laughs out of bliss (*ānanda*), weeps and laments out of affection (*sneha*), and dances out of love (*prīti*). In this way, by means of the tongue, *śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma-rasa* pervades all the senses.”

The *nāma* practiced during *sādhana* is but *chāyā-nāma* or *nāmābhāsa*, a shadow of *nāma* (chanting which

is covered by clouds of ignorance). It is not the real name. Continuous chanting of *nāmābhāsa* will eventually develop into a taste for *apṛākṛta-nāma*. Examples of this are evident in the lives of Vālmiki and Ajāmila.

The *jīva* has no taste for *nāma* because of his offences. When the *jīva* chants *kṛṣṇa-nāma* without offence, the *caitanya-rasa-vigraha* (the fully conscious reservoir of all pleasure), transcendental *śrī hari-nāma*, manifests Himself within his heart. At that time, his heart becomes joyful, streams of tears flow from his eyes, and symptoms of *sāttvika* ecstasy appear in his body. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.3.24) states:

*tad aśma-sāraṁ hṛdayaṁ batedaṁ  
yad-gr̥hyamāṇair hari-nāma-dheyaiḥ  
na vikriyetātha yadā vikāro  
netre jalaṁ gātra-ruheṣu harṣaḥ*

“When someone chants *hari-nāma*, the following symptoms manifest: he experiences a change of heart, tears flow from his eyes, and his bodily hairs stand erect. When, despite chanting *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, a person does not experience any of these symptoms, it is to be understood that his heart has become very hard due to offences.”

The primary duty of a *sādhaka* is to chant *hari-nāma* without offence. Therefore, it is necessary to know how many types of offences there are, and in this way he



can save himself from committing them. The scriptures mention ten offences in relation to *hari-nāma*:

- (1) To blaspheme devotees and saintly persons.
- (2) To consider demigods like Lord Śiva and Lord Brahmā to be equal to Bhagavān or independent of Him.
- (3) To neglect, disrespect, or disobey Śrī Guru, who reveals the truth about *hari-nāma*.
- (4) To criticize the bona-fide scriptures, which describe the glories of *hari-nāma*.
- (5) To consider the glories of *hari-nāma* to be an exaggeration.
- (6) To consider the meanings of *hari-nāma* revealed in scripture to be imaginary; in other words, to consider the names Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, etc., to be a product of imagination.
- (7) To commit sinful activities on the strength of chanting *hari-nāma*.
- (8) To equate chanting of *hari-nāma* with materially auspicious activities recommended in the *karma-kāṇḍa* sections of the Vedas.
- (9) To instruct faithless persons on the glories of *hari-nāma*.
- (10) To not have faith in *śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma* despite hearing His glories.

(1) A person commits an offence to *hari-nāma* if he does not believe in the saintly devotees and he blasphemes the previous spiritual authorities (*mahājanas*), whose

characters are spotless. Thus, one who accepts *hari-nāma* must first reject with his whole heart the tendency to disrespect or disregard any Vaiṣṇava. If a doubt arises about the activity of a Vaiṣṇava, one should try to inquire about the cause of that behavior and avoid criticizing him. Our primary duty is to have faith (*śraddhā*) in the *sādhus*.

(2) To consider demigods like Lord Śiva to be non-different from Bhagavān is *nāmāparādha*. *Bhagavat-tattva* is one without a second. Demigods like Lord Śiva are not independent of Śrī Bhagavān's authority, nor are they separate from Him. If a person honors demigods like Śiva as *guṇāvatāras* (qualitative incarnations) or as devotees of Bhagavān, he will not form the misconception that they are independent of Him. Those who consider Mahādeva (Śiva) an independent and separate demigod, worshipping him alongside Viṣṇu, do not actually honor the true glory of Mahādeva, who is the greatest among Vaiṣṇavas. Such persons therefore become offensive to both Viṣṇu and Śiva. Those who chant *hari-nāma* should reject this kind of misconception.

(3) To disobey Śrī Gurudeva is an offence to the holy name (*nāmāparādha*). He who instructs that *nāma-tattva* is the highest transcendental truth should be accepted as a bonafide spiritual master and a dear associate of Bhagavān. One can attain firm faith in *hari-nāma* by cultivating staunch *bhakti* for Śrī Guru.

(4) The bona fide scriptures should never be blasphemed. Revealed scriptures like the Vedas describe *bhāgavata-dharma* and detail the importance of *śrī nāma*. Therefore, to blaspheme these scriptures is an offence to the holy name. The glories of *hari-nāma* are described throughout the Vedas. *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 7.131) states:

*vede rāmāyaṇe caiva  
puraṇe bhārata tathā  
ādāv ante ca madhye ca  
hariḥ sarvatra gīyate*

“Throughout all the Vedic literature, including the Rāmāyaṇa, Purāṇas, and Mahābhārata, from the very beginning to the end, as well as in the middle, only Śrī Hari, the Supreme Lord, is described.”

How can a person develop love for *hari-nāma* if he blasphemes bona fide scriptures? Some people consider the statements of the scriptures regarding the importance of *hari-nāma* to be simply exaggerated praise. It is *nāmāparādha* to chant *hari-nāma* with such an attitude, and those who do so will never achieve any tangible result. They conclude that the scriptures falsely praise the glories of *hari-nāma*, just as they falsely praise *karma-kāṇḍa*, so that people will develop a taste for it. Those who think like this are unfortunate. On the other hand, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.1.11) describes the faith of fortunate persons:

*etan nirvidyamānānām  
icchatām akuto-bhayam  
yoginām nṛpa nirṇītam  
harer namānukīrtanam*

“A *yogī* thinks that by obtaining detachment from the world he can become free from all fear, and concludes that his wholesale duty is to chant *hari-nāma*. Persons who have such faith can achieve the result of *hari-nāma*.”

(5) Some people do not understand the difference between *nāmābhāsa* and *nāma*. They believe that *nāma* is only a combination of syllables that will definitely grant results whether one has faith or not. They use the life and character of Ajāmila as an example, quoting:

*sāṅketyam pārihāsyam vā  
stobham helanam eva vā  
vaikuṅṭha-nāma-grahaṇam  
aśeṣāgha-haram viduḥ*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.2.14)

“One who chants *hari-nāma* is immediately freed from the reactions to unlimited sins, even if he chants indirectly (to indicate something else), jokingly, for musical entertainment, or neglectfully. This is concluded by all the learned scholars of the scriptures.”

(6) Previously, *hari-nāma* has been described as the conscious embodiment of spiritual *rasa*, *caitanya-rasa- vigraha*, which cannot be perceived by the material senses. This proves that it is not possible to achieve the results of chanting when one commits offenses to the name. He who chants without faith does not achieve the result of chanting; rather, as a result of chanting, he may attain some faith in *nāma* within a short period. Faithless persons, who believe that *nāma* is a limb of *karma-kāṇḍa*, propagate that it is only a material syllable and therefore equal to other names. They are conditioned souls and offenders (*nāmāparādhīs*). Vaiṣṇavas diligently endeavor to avoid this offence.

(7) Some people believe that by taking shelter of *harināma*, they have attained a cheap remedy for the results of all their sins. With this idea they think that they can steal, perform acts of fraud, act illicitly, and then chant *hari-nāma* to eradicate all their misdeeds. A person who believes this is certainly a *nāmāparādhī* (offender to *nāma*). One who has once tasted the transcendental mellows of *hari-nāma* will never again become attached to temporary material objects.

(8) Some believe in pious activities (*karma*) such as performing *yajña*, giving in charity, behaving according to *dharma*, and visiting holy places. They also include the chanting of *nāma* as a pious activity, and therefore become offenders to the holy name (*nāmāparādhīs*). *Nāma*

is always transcendental, whereas all pious activities are material. Thus, pious activities are foreign to *nāma*. Anyone who considers *nāma* to be equivalent to pious activities becomes indifferent to *nāma* and cannot relish the *rasa* emanating from the holy name (*nāma-rasa*). There is a vast difference between *hari-nāma* and pious activity, just as there is a contrast between diamonds and glass.

(9) One who instructs faithless persons about *hari-nāma* or gives them the *mantra* is also a *nāmāparādhi*. It is useless to give a string of pearls to a hog. Rather, such behavior demonstrates disregard to the pearls and is an insult to them. Similarly, it is extremely improper to give instruction on *nāma* to a faithless person. It is wise to first make an effort to develop his faith, and then instruct him on *hari-nāma*. Those who act as *guru* and give instructions on *hari-nāma* to faithless persons will definitely fall down—because they are committing *nāmāparādha*.

(10) If a person does not have exclusive faith in *hari-nāma* even after hearing its extensive glories, and if he is still attached to or dependent on *sādhanas* such as *karma*, *jñāna*, or *yoga*, then he is an offender to the holy name. Thus, *hari-nāma* will not arise unless we avoid *nāmāparādha*. Upon seeing the miseries of the *jīva*, the deliverer of Kali-yuga, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, instructs us with a compassionate heart:

*ṭṛṇād api sunīcena*  
*taror api sahiṣṇunā*  
*amāninā mānadena*  
*kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

(Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka 3)

“By thinking oneself to be even lower than straw in the street, being more tolerant than a tree, not accepting honor but giving honor to everyone, a *jīva* becomes eligible to chant *hari-nāma*.”

The primary meaning of this verse is that one must chant *hari-nāma* with proper conduct. One who considers himself more lowly and fallen than anyone else never criticizes *sādhus* nor disregards demigods like Lord Śiva. He differentiates, but with respect. He never disregards *guru*, blasphemes the bona fide scriptures, or doubts the glories of *hari-nāma*. He never combines false speculation with dry arguments to equate *nirguṇa-brahma* with the name of ‘Hari’, nor does he commit sins on the strength of the holy name. He does not accept pious activities to be on an equal level with *hari-nāma*. He never gives *hari-nāma* to faithless persons, and he does not have even a scent of disbelief in *nāma*. He constantly endeavors to be aloof from the ten types of *nāmāparādha*. He remains a well-wisher even to those who ridicule or offend him. Even though he carries out his worldly duties, he does not possess the false ego of being the enjoyer or the doer.

Thinking himself to be a servant of the world, he serves the whole world.

When a qualified person chants *hari-nāma*, the spiritual world that is situated in the core of his heart radiates transcendental light which, like a thunderbolt, pierces the shroud of illusion enveloping all the *jīvas* in the material creation, thus keeping the darkness of *māyā* far away. Therefore, O great souls! Constantly perform *hari-nāma-kīrtana* without offence. There is no shelter for the *jīvas* other than *hari-nāma*. If you take shelter of *jñāna* and *karma*, trying to save yourself from drowning in this ocean of material existence, you should know it is as useless as taking shelter of a piece of straw to cross a great ocean. Therefore, accepting the shelter of the great ship of the *mahā-mantra*, cross this ocean of material existence.



*Hari-nāma*  
MAHĀ-MANTRA

हे कृष्ण हे कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण हे हे ।  
हे राम हे राम राम राम हे हे ॥

HARE KṚṢṆA HARE KṚṢṆA  
KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA HARE HARE  
HARE RĀMA HARE RĀMA  
RĀMA RĀMA HARE HARE

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