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THE JOURNEY TO PREMA

~ A Course in the Science of Bhakti-Yoga ~

Lesson 19

Please Chant:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa - Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma - Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

IN THIS LESSON:

- The Speaking of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam
- Removing the Seed of Sinful Desires
- The History of Ajāmila—Saved By the Holy Names
- The Symptoms of Pure Bhakti



His Divine Grace
Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja
(Affectionately called Śrīla Gurudeva)

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THE JOURNEY TO PREMA – LESSON 19

Dear servant of God,

Please accept our respects as we humbly bow down and offer them to you. All glories to Śrīla Gurudeva and to all of the exalted members of our chain of gurus!

Back in Lesson 15, we spent a lot of time talking about what true mukti (liberation) is and how it relates to the goal of our lives. In this lesson, we are going to continue to look at the goal of our lives, but this time we are going to do so from a slightly different perspective.

One of the most interesting truths about bhakti is that once we begin to perform it on a fairly pure level we have already attained liberation from this world. This is because, in the practice of bhakti-yoga, bhakti, love driven service, is both the means to attain the goal and the goal itself.

This is explained by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura as follows:

“Every endeavor has a goal and some means to attain it. The goal one strives to attain is called sādhyā, and the practice one adopts to reach that goal is called sādhanā. If you reflect deeply, you will see that the goals that are usually strived for are not the highest goal, and therefore they are like links in a chain...Due to this, if one follows this chain, he eventually comes to the final link, which is the true goal of life.” (Jaiva Dharma)

As long as we perform only kāmya-karma (deeds driven by desires to satisfy our senses), we will only build an ongoing chain of actions and reactions that will bind us to this world. If, however, we at least begin to perform our duties without these desires and, in an unattached state, while we offer the results to the Lord (niṣkāma-karma-yoga) then we can at least begin to develop true spiritual knowledge and thus start a chain of cause and effect that will lead to our true goal. This is also discussed by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in this way:

“When one crosses all the links in this chain of sādhyā and sādhanā, one eventually reaches the final link, which is known as bhakti. Bhakti is therefore the highest sādhyā, because it is the jīvas eternal state of perfection... The final link in the chain of performing one’s duties while seeking personal rewards is only material enjoyment (bhukti). [Which is always temporary and surrounded by miseries such as birth and death.] The final link in the chain of jñāna is liberation in the temporary, formless, unvariegated state of Brahm. [Jñāna, as used here, refers to the cultivation of knowledge related to achieving this state, which we described as sankhya in Lesson 15. It does not refer to the pure knowledge of the jñāna-yoga path.] Moreover, the final goal (sādhyā) in the chain of bhakti is prema-bhakti. Therefore, if one reflects upon these truths as they pertain to the jīvas attaining his highest possible state of existence, one must conclude that bhakti is both the means to attain the goal (sādhanā) and the goal itself (sādhyā).” (Jaiva Dharma)

Knowing this, we need to deeply examine what bhakti is and how it relates to the goal, prema-bhakti; this is why we will spend a great deal of time on these subjects in the second half of this lesson.

In the first half, we’re going to share one of the most important of all of the stories in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. It describes the life of a very sinful man, and it tells how he was saved from facing the reactions to his sins because he called out the Lord’s name in his final moments.

There are many, many truths to be found in this true historical account, so, if you seek the mercy of Śrīla Gurudeva, and you study this lesson with faith, asking him to help you absorb it into your heart, then by the time you are done reading, rereading, and studying it you will surely find that you have taken a few more steps on your journey to prema.

A Brief History of the

Speaking of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam

In previous lessons, we have told you a little bit about the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. We mentioned that the sage who wrote down the Vedas at the beginning of this age of quarrel (kali-yuga) found himself unsatisfied, even after compiling a large collection of truths. At that time, Nārada muni (see Lesson 11) appeared on the scene and instructed this sage, Śrīla Vyāsadeva, to expand the Vedas to contain specific descriptions of the Lords forms and pastimes, and, in doing so, to point out the glories and the superiority of the bhakti path.

Having done, Śrīla Vyāsadeva would later instruct all of these truths to his son, Śukadeva Gosvāmī + shook-uh-dave.

During this time, the emperor of the earth was a great king named Mahārāja Parikṣit. Mahārāja Parikṣit was a wise and worthy king, and do to his superior qualities he was able to hold off the imminent onset of kali-yuga and the great declines in society that were due to begin. Yet, even while bearing this great responsibility, a situation would arise that would result in his given up both his rule of the earth and his material body as well.

As we hear this story, we should be aware of the fact that Mahārāja Parikṣit was a pure devotee who could never be affected by the agitations of the material body or mind, and yet, in this case he displayed these weaknesses. This is an indication of the fact that this entire scene was carried out by the Lord in order to create the situation that lead to the speaking of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

One day, while out hunting (an activity carried out only by warriors to sharpen their skills, and by lower classes of people) Mahārāja Parikṣit became thirsty and tired. Wandering into the cottage of a great sage, he asked the sage for some water. The sage, who was in the deepest stage of meditation (samādhi), did not respond to the king’s request, and thus Mahārāja Parikṣit became angry. As he left the cottage, the king saw a dead snake lying near the door, and picking it up with the end of his bow, he draped it around the sage’s neck like a garland. As he traveled home, he began to deeply regret his actions.



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In the meantime, the sage's son, who was endowed with great powers, heard of how the king had insulted his father, and thus he cursed Mahārāja Parikṣit to be bitten by a snake, seven days later, and to die on that very day.

Upon awakening, the sage regretted his son's curse because the fall of a great king like Mahārāja Parikṣit would disrupt society, and although he tried to think of a way to change the situation, he was unable to do so.

Similarly, as Mahārāja Parikṣit arrived home, he also considered how he might alleviate the great sin he had committed in disrespecting the sage. Realizing that it was his own lack of self-control that had led to his behavior, he actually hoped (while not yet knowing of the curse) that some calamity would befall him, thus balancing his karma.

At this time, news of the curse arrived, and although he could have possibly counteracted it, he chose instead to see the entire situation as the workings of the Lord, who had now presented him with a great opportunity to give up all his material attachments, and prepare him for a death that would allow him to attain permanent residence in the spiritual worlds. And thus he handed over his kingdom to his son and went to the bank of a holy river, where he sat down, fully prepared to fast and concentrate his mind solely on the Lord until the time came for him to depart his material body.

The greatest sages of that time, who had the ability to know in advance what would take place, began to gather about the king. When a great assembly had been seated there, Mahārāja Parikṣit stood and asked the sages to speak about the Lord and instruct him on the highest truths.

At that time, by the Lord's arrangement, Śukadeva Gosvāmī also arrived there, and it was he who was selected by the king to give these instructions.

Later, at another time, and in another assembly of sages, the conversation between Mahārāja Parikṣit and Śukadeva Gosvāmī was re-spoken, and it was this second discourse that is actually recorded in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, as it exists today. However, it was the conversation that took place as the king awaited death that is most significantly thought of as the speaking of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

The long story that we are about to share is found in the first three chapters of the Sixth Canto (section) of this great work, and you will find the two great personalities that we have just introduced you to as the speakers of these quotes.

We will also interspace this story with quotes from our ācāryas and our own comments as well.

On another note here, we will point out that the word “śuka” means “parrot”, and that Śukadeva Gosvāmī is actually a manifestation of the pet parrot of Śrī Rādhā. This is interesting because it assures us that he, as a pure resident of the highest realm in the spiritual world (Vṛndāvana), is guaranteed to be aware of all aspects of the Absolute Truth, and it can also be noted that the quality of “speaking like a parrot” is very valuable when it comes to spreading the Absolute Truth because we are only to speak what we have heard.

Although we may not be situated like Mahārāja Parikṣit, knowing the exact day of our impending departure from our material body, we should still, like he, realize the value and importance of hearing these truths, and we should do our best to set aside as much time as we can to deeply and seriously trying to bring them into our hearts.

Finally, before we begin our story of the miraculous power of the Holy Names, we're going to share a very short mantra/prayer with you. Here we offer our heartfelt respects to both the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam and to Śrīla Vyāsadeva, its compiler. This mantra is often chanted before the Śrīmad

Bhāgavatam is read or studied, and we ask you to do the same, for this book is known to be the literary incarnation of the Lord Himself and Śrīla Vyāsadeva was an especially empowered sādhu as well, so by associating with them, paying our respects to them, and seeking their mercy and guidance, we can begin to learn, understand, and realize these truths.

om namo bhagavate vasudevāya

“O my Lord, the all-pervading Personality of Godhead, I offer my obeisances unto You.”

This prayer is very simple, yet very wonderful as well, so let us all chant it together as we prepare to study this amazing true story on the miraculous powers of the Holy Names.

The Seed of Sinful Desires

Reference Note: Unless otherwise noted, the verses below are derived from the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, and the quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda appear in his purports to these verses.

In the Vedas, we find that there are many types of atonement recommended for those who commit sinful deeds. Since this concept may be new to some of you, and since the first part of this story discusses this practice, we felt we should say a few words about it before we begin.

If one commits a sinful act, the Vedas may recommend various ways that one can atone for it. By “atone”, we refer to trying to make amends for the wrong by doing something right. While this is not a common practice in Christianity, the Catholic faith does have a similar principle in the sacrament of confession, where one receives prayers or other penances that he must perform as a part of the forgiveness process.

In the Vedas, this atonement could involve many more varieties of things, such as giving in charity, practicing celibacy, taking a vow of truthfulness, and so on.

In the opening of this historical account we find that Śukadeva Gosvāmī is discussing the process of atonement, and, in doing so, he teaches us that while various practices may atone for our sins, only one process can uproot the seed of desires from which these wrongful deeds sprout. Can you guess what it is?

So now, as we prepare to hear this story, let us picture ourselves sitting amongst a great assembly of sages, on the bank of a holy river, as we quietly and faithfully listen in on what is being taught.

At this point in their conversation, Śukadeva Gosvāmī has finished the descriptions of the hellish planets that we shared in Lesson 18, and, although he could never have possibly wound up there, for the benefit of others, including us, he inquires how such a fate can be avoided.

Mahārāja Parikṣit asks:

6.1.6 *O greatly fortunate and opulent Śukadeva Gosvāmī, now kindly tell me how human beings may be saved from having to enter hellish conditions in which they suffer terrible pains.*

6.1.7 *Śukadeva Gosvāmī replied: My dear king; if before one's death whatever impious acts one has performed in this life with his mind, words, and body are not counteracted through proper atonement, according to [the sections of the Vedas that discuss this], one will certainly enter the hellish planets after death and undergo terrible suffering as I have previously described to you.*

6.1.8 *Therefore, before one's next death comes, as long as one's body is strong enough, one should quickly adopt the process of atonement according to śāstra (the scriptures/the Vedas); otherwise one's time will be lost, and the reactions of his sins will increase. As an expert physician diagnoses and treats a disease according to its gravity, one should undergo*

atonement according to the severity of one's sins.

In discussing this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda points out that the atonement for first-degree murder is capital punishment, because, by killing a murderer, mercy is shown to him. This is because, if he is not killed in this life, he will be forced to suffer in future lives. He also mentions that, in proper civilizations, expert scholars of the Vedas are consulted to determine proper punishment, which is superior to relying on man-made laws.

6.1.9 **Mahārāja Parikṣit said:** *One may know that sinful activity is injurious for him because he actually sees that the criminal is punished by the government and rebuked by people in general, and because he hears from scriptures and learned scholars that people are thrown into hellish conditions in the next life for committing sinful acts.*

Nevertheless, in spite of such knowledge, one is forced to commit sinful acts repeatedly, even after performing acts of atonement. Therefore, what is the value of such atonement?

6.1.10 *Sometimes, one who is very alert so as to not commit sinful acts is victimized by sinful life again. I therefore consider this process of repeated sinning and atoning to be useless. It is like the bathing of an elephant, for an elephant cleanses itself by taking a full bath, but then throws dust over its head and body as soon as it returns to land.*

6.1.11 **Śukadeva Gosvāmī,** the son of Vyāsadeva, answered: *My dear king, since acts meant to neutralize impious actions are also fruitive (karma—they will have reactions) they will not release one from the tendency to act fruitively (seeking material rewards). Persons who subject themselves to the rules and regulations of atonement are not intelligent. Indeed, they are under the influence of tamo-guṇa (the mode of ignorance), trying to counteract one's action through another is useless because it will not uproot one's desires. Thus, even though one (who performs atonement) may superficially seem pious, he will undoubtedly be prone to act impiously. Therefore, real atonement is becoming enlightened in the pure knowledge that will allow one to understand the Supreme Lord.*

6.1.12 *My dear king, if a diseased person eats the pure uncontaminated food prescribed by a physician, he is gradually cured and the infection of disease can no longer touch him. Similarly, if one follows the regulations set out in the pure sections of the Vedas, he progresses toward liberation from māyā.*

6.1.13-14 *To concentrate the mind, one must observe a life of celibacy and not fall down. One must undergo the austerity of voluntarily giving up sense enjoyment. One must then control the mind and senses, give charity, be truthful, clean, and non-violent, and follow the regulative principles. Thus a sober and faithful person who knows the religious principles is temporally purified of all sins performed with his body, mind and words. Then his sins will however still be like the dried leaves of weeds beneath a bamboo tree, for, although they may be burned by fire, their roots will remain to grow again at the first opportunity.*

6.1.15 *Only a rare person, who has adopted complete, unalloyed devotional service to Kṛṣṇa (uttamā-bhakti/see second half of this lesson) can uproot the weeds of sinful reactions with no possibility that they will revive. He can do this simply by performing this pure, one-pointed bhakti, just as the sun can immediately dissipate fog by its rays.*

6.1.16 *My dear king, if a sincere person engages in the service of a bona-fide devotee of the Lord and thus learns how to dedicate his life unto the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, he can be completely purified. One cannot be purified merely by undergoing austerity, penance, celibacy, and the other methods of atonement I have previously described.*

In his comments on this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us

that a bona-fide devotee is one who engages his entire life in the service of the Lord—twenty-four hours a day, and that, “...if one desires liberation from the clutches of māyā, one must associate with such a pure devotee... one must render service to a Vaiṣṇava in order to revive one's original Kṛṣṇa consciousness and be trained in how to love Kṛṣṇa. Of course, if one engages in the service of a pure devotee, the reactions of one's sinful life are vanquished automatically no separate endeavor is required.”

Later in these same comments, Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to the same verse we've shared with you twice now, and in doing so he discusses the topic we've shared this verse in relation to, that of accepting everything as Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Śrīla Prabhupāda says:

“Such a devotee is unafraid wherever he is sent: he simply wants to remember Kṛṣṇa, wherever he may be. Such a devotee is unconcerned with hell or heaven; he is simply attached to rendering service to Kṛṣṇa. When a devotee is put into hellish conditions, he accepts them as Kṛṣṇa's mercy: tat te nukampām susamīkṣamānah (S.B. 10.14. 8) He does not protest. ‘Oh, I am such a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Why have I been put into this misery?’ Instead he thinks, ‘This is Kṛṣṇa's mercy.’ Such an attitude is possible for a devotee who engages in the service of Kṛṣṇa's representative. This is the secret of success.”

Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued:

6.1.17 *The path followed by pure devotees, who are well behaved and fully endowed with the best qualifications, is certainly the most auspicious path in the material world. It is free from fear and it is authorized by the śāstras (scriptures/Vedas).*

6.1.18 *My dear king, as a pot containing liquor cannot be purified even if washed in the waters of many rivers, non-devotees cannot be purified by processes of atonement even if they perform them very well.*

In connection with this truth, we can see why sentences given by governments do not eliminate the criminal nature of most criminals. Thus, with hearts that are still impure, they continue to sin repeatedly. This is why punishments such as the paying of fines and incarceration are ineffective in decreasing crime.

6.1.19 *Although they may have not yet fully realized Kṛṣṇa, persons who even once surrender completely to His lotus feet and who have become attracted to His name, form, qualities, and pastimes are completely freed from sinful reactions, for they have accepted the true method of atonement. Even in dreams, such surrendered souls do not see Yamarāja (the judge who arranges for the punishment of sinful persons) or his order carriers, who are equipped with ropes to bind the sinful.*

6.1.20 *In this regard, learned scholars and sādhus describe a very old historical account involving a discussion between the order carriers of Lord Viṣṇu (one of Kṛṣṇa's expansions) and those of Yamarāja. Please hear this from me.*

We should note here that the following is an “historical account”. Unintelligent doubters think that the factual events recounted in the Vedas are “myths”. This is not the case. These events are true stories and we are wise to accept them in this way.

Ajāmila's Life

6.1.21 *There once lived a Brāhmaṇa (a member of the highest social order, a learned and religious man) named Ajāmila + uh-jā-meel (jā like job) who married a prostitute maidservant and lost all his high-class qualities because of the association of that low-class woman.*

Here we find the truth of how poor quality association can lead to disaster.

6.1.22 This fallen Brāhmaṇa, Ajāmila, gave trouble to others by arresting them, by cheating them in gambling, or by directly plundering them. This was the way he earned his livelihood and maintained his wife and children.

6.1.23 My dear king, while he thus spent his time in abominable, sinful activities to maintain his family of many sons, eighty-eight years of his life passed by.

6.1.24 That old man Ajāmila had ten sons, of whom the youngest was a baby named Nārāyaṇa. Since Nārāyaṇa was the youngest of all the sons, he was naturally very dear to both his father and mother.

6.1.25 Because of the child's broken language and awkward movements, old Ajāmila was very much attached to him. He always took care of the child and enjoyed the child's activities.

6.1.26 When Ajāmila ate food, he called the child to eat, and when he drank, he called the child to drink also. Always engaged in taking care of the child and calling his name, Nārāyaṇa, Ajāmila could not understand that his own time was now exhausted and that death was upon him.

Commenting on this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us: **"The Supreme Personality of God is kind to the conditioned souls.** Although this man completely forgot about Nārāyaṇa (the Supreme Lord), he was calling his child, saying, "Nārāyaṇa, please come eat this food. Nārāyaṇa, please come drink this milk." Somehow or other, therefore, he was attached to the name Nārāyaṇa. This is called *ajñāta-sukṛti* (spiritual credits that are unknowingly earned). Although calling for his son, he was unknowingly chanting the name of Nārāyaṇa, and the holy name of the Supreme Personality of God is so transcendently powerful that his chanting was being counted and recorded."

6.1.27 When the time of death arrived for the foolish Ajāmila, he began thinking exclusively of his son Nārāyaṇa.

Ajāmila then saw three awkward persons with deformed bodily features, fierce, twisted faces, and hairs standing erect on their bodies. With ropes in their hands, they had come to take him away to the abode of Yamarāja. When he saw them he was extremely bewildered, and because of attachment to his child, who was playing a short distance away, Ajāmila began to call him loudly by his name. Thus with tears in his eyes, he somehow or other chanted the holy name Nārāyaṇa.

6.1.30 My dear King, the order carriers of Viṣṇu, the Viṣṇudūtas, immediately arrived when they heard the holy name of their master from the mouth of the dying Ajāmila, who had certainly chanted without offense because he had chanted in complete anxiety.

In an earlier lesson, we told you that even if one chants the Holy Names to indicate something else, such as the river Kṛṣṇa, all one's sins are destroyed. In his comments on this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms this, saying:

"*Hari-kīrtana* (the chanting of the Holy Names) is actually meant to glorify... the Lord. Ajāmila, however, did not glorify the form, qualities, or paraphernalia of the Lord; he simply chanted the holy name. Nevertheless, the chanting was sufficient to cleanse him of all sinful activities."

6.1.31 The order carriers of Yamarāja were snatching the soul from the core of the heart of Ajāmila, the husband of the prostitute, but with resounding voices the messengers of Lord Viṣṇu, the Viṣṇudūtas, forbade them to do so.

6.1.32 When the order carriers of Yamarāja were thus forbidden, they replied, "Who are you sirs that you have the audacity to challenge the jurisdiction of Yamarāja?"

6.1.33 Dear sirs, whose servants are you, where have you come from, and why are you forbidding us to touch the body of Ajāmila? Are you demigods from the heavenly planets; are you sub-demigods, or are you the best of devotees?

6.1.34-36 The order carriers of Yamarāja said, Your eyes are just like the petals of lotus flowers. Dressed in yellow garments, decorated with garlands and lotuses, and wearing very attractive helmets on your heads and earrings on your ears, you all appear fresh and youthful. Your four long arms are decorated with bows and quivers of arrows, and with swords, clubs, conch shells, discs, and lotus flowers. Your effulgence has dissipated the darkness of this place with extra ordinary illumination. Now, sirs, why are you obstructing us?

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The Visnuduttas save the sinful Ajāmila

6.1.37 Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: Being thus addressed by the Yamadūtas, the servants of the Supreme Lord smiled and spoke the following words, in voices as deep as the sound of rumbling clouds.

6.1.38 The Viṣṇudūtas said: If you are actually servants of Yamarāja, you must explain to us the meaning of religious principles (dharma) and the symptoms of irreligion (adharma).

6.1.39 What is the process of punishing others? Who are the actual candidates for punishment? Are all those engaged in karma punishable, or only some of them?

6.1.40 The Yamadūtas replied: **That which is prescribed in the Vedas constitutes dharma, the religious principles, and the opposite of that is adharma.** The Vedas are directly the Supreme Personality of God, Nārāyaṇa, and are self-born. This we have heard from Yamarāja.

6.1.41 The supreme cause of all causes, Nārāyaṇa, is situated in His own abode in the spiritual world, but nevertheless He controls the entire cosmic manifestation according to the three guṇas. In this way, all living entities are awarded different qualities, different names, different social and religious duties, and different forms. Thus Nārāyaṇa is the cause of the entire cosmic manifestation.

6.1.42 The sun, fire, sky, air, demigods, moon, evening, day,

night, directions, water, land, and the Supersoul Himself all witness the activities of the living entity.

6.1.43 The candidates for punishment are those who are confirmed by these many witnesses to have deviated from their prescribed regulative duties (engaged in adharmā). Everyone engaged in karma, fruitive activities, is suitable to be subjected to punishment according to his sinful acts.

6.1.44 O inhabitants of Vaikuntha (the spiritual world), you are sinless, but those within this material world are all engaged in karma, whether acting piously or impiously. Both kinds of action are possible for them because they are contaminated by the three guṇas and must act accordingly. One who has accepted a material body cannot be inactive, and sinful action is inevitable for one acting under the influence of the guṇas. Therefore, all living entities within this material world are punishable.

6.1.45 In proportion to the extent of one's religious or irreligious activities (dharma or adharmā) in this life, one must enjoy or suffer the corresponding reactions of karma in the next.

6.1.46 O best of the demigods, we can see three different varieties of life that are due to the contamination of the three guṇas. The living entities are thus known as peaceful, restless, and foolish: as happy, unhappy, or in-between: or as religious, irreligious, or semi-religious. We can deduce that in the next life these three kinds of material natures will similarly act.

6.1.47 Just as springtime in the present indicates the nature of springtime in the past and future, so this life of happiness, distress, or a mixture of both gives evidence concerning the religious and irreligious activities of one's past and future lives.

6.1.48 The omnipotent Yamarāja is as good as Lord Brahmā, for while situated in his own abode or in everyone's heart like the Paramātmā, he mentally observes the past activities of a living entity and thus understands how the living entity will act in future lives.

6.1.49 As a sleeping person acts according to the body manifested in his dreams and accepts it to be himself, so one identifies with his present body, which he acquired because of his past religious or irreligious actions, although he is unable to remember his past lives or know of his future ones.

6.1.50 Above the five senses of perception (the knowledge gathering senses), the five working senses (the tools of action) and the five objects of the senses (touch, smell, sight, sound, taste) is the mind, which is the sixteenth element, the soul, the living being himself, who, in cooperation with the other sixteen, enjoys the material world. The living being enjoys three kinds of situations, namely happy, distressful, and mixed.

6.1.51 The subtle body is endowed with these sixteen parts. This subtle body is an effect of the three guṇas. It is composed of insurmountable strong desires, and therefore it causes the living entity to transmigrate from one body to another in human life, animal life, and life as a demigod.

When the living entity gets the body of a demigod he is certainly very jubilant, when he gets a human body he is always in lamentation, and when he gets the body of an animal he is always afraid. In all conditions, however, he is actually miserable. His miserable condition is called transmigration in material life.

6.1.52 The foolish embodied living entity, inept at controlling his senses and mind, is forced to act under the influence of the guṇas, against his desires. He is like a silk worm that uses his own saliva to create a cocoon and then becomes trapped in it, with no possibility of getting out. The living entity traps himself in a network of his own karma and then can find no way to release himself. Thus, he is always bewildered, and repeatedly he dies.

6.1.53 Not a single living entity can remain unengaged for even a moment. One must act by his natural tendency according to the three guṇas because this natural tendency forcibly makes him work in a particular way.

6.1.54 The karma a living entity performs, whether pious or impious, are the unseen cause for the fulfillment of his desires. This unseen cause is the root for the living entity's different bodies. Because of his intense desire, the living entity takes birth in a particular family and receives a body which is either like that of his mother or like that of his father. The gross and subtle bodies are created according to his desires.

6.1.55 Since the living entity is associated with material nature, he is in an awkward position, but if in the human form of life he is taught how to associate with the Supreme Personality of God or His devotee, this position can be overcome.

Here we again find the truth that our spiritual progress hinges on our association. The next verses also speak this truth.

6.1.56-57 In the beginning Ajāmila studied all the Vedic scriptures. He was a reservoir of good character, good conduct, and good qualities. Firmly established in executing all the Vedic injunctions, he was very mild and gentle and he kept his mind and senses under control. Furthermore, he was always truthful, he learned how to chant the Vedic mantras, and he was also very pure. Ajāmila was very respectful to his guru, the fire-god, guests, and the elderly members of his household. Indeed, he was free from false prestige. He was upright, benevolent to all living entities and well behaved. He would never speak nonsense or envy anyone.

6.1.58-60 Once this Brāhmaṇa Ajāmila, following the orders of his father, went to the forest to collect fruit, flowers, and two kinds of grass. On the way home he came upon a very lusty fourth-class man, who was shamelessly embracing and kissing a prostitute. The man was smiling, singing, and enjoying as if this were proper behavior. Both the man and the prostitute were drunk. The prostitute eyes were rolling in intoxication and her dress had become loose. Such was the condition in which Ajāmila saw them.

6.1.61 This man was embracing the prostitute and when Ajāmila saw her, the dormant lusty desires in his heart awakened, and in illusion he fell under their control.

6.1.62 As far as possible, he tried to remember the instructions of the scriptures to not even look at a woman. With the help of this knowledge and his intellect, he tried to control his lusty desires, but because of the force of cupid within his heart, he failed to control his mind.

6.1.63 In the same way that the sun and moon are eclipsed, the Brāhmaṇa lost all good sense. Taking advantage of this situation, he always thought of the prostitute, and within a short time, he took her as a servant in his house and abandoned all the dharma (duties) of a Brāhmaṇa.

6.1.64 Thus Ajāmila began to spend whatever money he had inherited from his father to satisfy the prostitute with various material presentations so that she would remain pleased with him. He gave up all his brāhmaṇical activities to satisfy the prostitute.

6.1.65 Because his intelligence was pierced by the lustful glance of the prostitute, the victimized Ajāmila engaged in sinful acts in her association. He even gave up the company of his very beautiful young wife, who come from a respectable brāhmaṇa family

6.1.66 Although born of a brāhmaṇa family, this rascal, bereft of intelligence because of the prostitute's association, earned money somehow or other, regardless of whether properly or improperly, and used it to maintain the prostitute's sons and

daughters.

6.1.67 *This brāhmaṇa irresponsibly spent his long lifetime transgressing all the rules and regulations of the Holy Scriptures, living extravagantly and eating food prepared by a prostitute. Therefore, he is full of sins. He is unclean and addicted to forbidden activities.*

6.1.68 *This man Ajāmila did not undergo atonement. Therefore, because of his sinful life, we must take him into the presence of Yamarāja for punishment. There, according to the extent of his sinful acts, he will be punished and thus purified.*

This ends the first chapter in the historical account of Ajāmila. Before we continue, we will point out two truths. The first is that Ajāmila's position as a brāhmaṇa, an educated, upper class man is repeatedly brought out because this shows that he was fully aware of his duties, and thus, as was discussed last month, when we spoke of the hellish planets, he was especially responsible for his actions and subject to more severe punishment.

His status as a brāhmaṇa is also a part of a second point, where, in verse 6.1.67 it mentions his eating food cooked by a prostitute. The Vedas explain that the consciousness of a person preparing food is absorbed into the food to some degree. For this reason, brāhmaṇas, who are generally very well behaved and righteous, are instructed only to eat food prepared by another brāhmaṇa, as was the case with his first wife. Thus, by giving her up, and consuming the food cooked by the prostitute, he became even more influenced by her and absorbed in more activities that are sinful as well.

We also note that this is why devotees prefer to eat food cooked by other devotees.

Ajāmila Saved By the Viṣṇudūtas

6.2.1 Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: **My dear king, the servants of Lord Viṣṇu are always very expert in logic and arguments.** After hearing the statements of the Yamadūtas, they replied as follows.

6.2.2 *The Viṣṇudūtas said, Alas, how painful it is that adharma is being introduced into an assembly where dharma should be maintained. Indeed, those in charge of maintaining dharma are needlessly punishing a sinless, unpunishable person.*

6.2.3 **A king or government official should be so well qualified that he acts as a father, maintainer, and protector of the citizens because of affection and love. He should give the citizens good advice and instructions according to the standard scriptures and should be equal to everyone.**

Yamarāja does this, for he is the supreme master of justice, and so do those who follow in his footsteps. However, if those persons become polluted and exhibit partiality by punishing an innocent, blameless person, where will the citizens go to take shelter for their maintenance and security?

6.2.4 *The mass of people follows the example of a leader in society and imitate his behavior. They accept as evidence whatever the leader accepts.*

6.2.5-6 *People in general are not very advanced in knowledge by which to discriminate between dharma and adharma. The innocent, unenlightened citizen is like an ignorant animal sleeping in peace with its head on the lap of its master, faithfully believing in the master's protection. If a leader is actually kindhearted and deserves to be the object of a living entity's faith, how can he punish or kill a foolish person who has fully surrendered in good faith and friendship?*

In commenting on this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda discusses the suffering that is due to those who raise animals for slaughter, telling us:

"In this age, animals are kept nicely, completely confident that their masters will protect them, but unfortunately, as soon as the animals are fat, they are immediately sent for slaughter. Such cruelty is condemned by Vaiṣṇavas like the Viṣṇudūtas.

Indeed, the hellish conditions already described await the sinful men responsible for such suffering. One who betrays the confidence of a living entity who takes shelter of him in good faith, whether it be a human being or an animal, is extremely sinful. Because such betrayals go unpunished by the government, all of human society is extremely contaminated...As a consequence of such sins men are condemned, their intelligence is unclear, they are unfortunate, and therefore they are always disturbed by many problems. This is the situation in this life, and after death they are punished in hellish conditions."

We should also note that it is not just those who raise and slaughter these innocent animals that are implicated in these sins. Those who convey, purchase, cook, and eat their flesh will be forced to suffer as well.

6.2.7 *Ajāmila has already atoned for all his sinful actions. Indeed, he has atoned not only for sins performed in one life, but for those performed in millions of lives, for in a helpless condition he chanted the name of Nārāyaṇa. Even though he did not chant purely, he chanted without offense, and therefore he is now pure and eligible for liberation.*

6.2.8 *The Viṣṇudūtas continued: Even previously, while eating and at other times, this Ajāmila would call his son, saying, 'My dear Nārāyaṇa, please come here.' Although calling the name of his son, he nevertheless uttered the four syllables nā-rā-ya-na. Simply by chanting the name of Nārāyaṇa in this way, he sufficiently atoned for the sinful reactions of millions of lives.*

6.2.9-10 **The chanting of the holy names is the best process of atonement for the thief of gold or other valuables, for a drunkard, for one who betrays a friend or relative, for one who kills a brāhmaṇa, or for one who indulges in sex with the wife of his guru or another superior. It is also the best atonement for one who murders women, the king or his father, for one who slaughters cows and for all other sinful men. Simply by chanting the holy names of Viṣṇu, such sinful persons may attract the attention of the Supreme Lord, who therefore considers, "Because this man has chanted My holy name, My duty is to give him protection."**

6.2.11 *By following the Vedic ritualistic ceremonies or undergoing other forms of atonement, sinful men do not become as purified as by chanting once the holy name of Lord Hari. Although ritual atonement may free one from sinful reactions, it does not awaken bhakti, the chanting of the holy names however does so by reminding one of the Lord's fame, qualities, attributes, pastimes, and paraphernalia.*

6.2.12 *The methods of atonement given in the scriptures are insufficient to cleanse the heart absolutely because after atonement one's mind again runs toward material activities. Consequently, for one seeking liberation from the reactions of karma, the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra or glorification of the name, fame, and pastimes of the Lord is recommended as the most perfect process of atonement because such chanting eradicates the dirt from one's heart completely.*

We should note here that this total cleansing of the heart is not immediately accomplished. There is a process to be followed, which includes other aspects of devotional behavior, before every last vestige of material desires are removed from the heart. The point here is that by chanting the Holy Names, this complete cleansing can be attained, whereas, by other methods such as karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and the processes of atonement, this totally purification can never be attained, and thus, material desires and sinful activities are sure to return.

6.2.13 *At the time of death, this Ajāmila helplessly and very loudly chanted the holy name of Lord Nārāyaṇa. That chanting alone has already freed him from the reactions of all sinful*

life. Therefore, O servants of Yamarāja, do not try to take him to your master for punishment in hellish conditions.

6.2.14 **One who chants the holy names of the Lord is immediately freed from the reactions of unlimited sins, even if he chants indirectly [to indicate something else], jokingly, for musical entertainment, or even neglectfully. This is accepted by all the learned scholars of the scriptures.**

6.2.15 If one chants the holy name of Hari and then dies because of an accidental misfortune, such as falling from the top of a house, slipping and suffering broken bones while traveling on the road, being bitten by a serpent, being afflicted by pain and high fever, or being injured by a weapon, one is immediately absolved from having to enter hellish life, even though he is sinful.

6.2.16 Authorities who are learned scholars and sages have carefully ascertained that one should atone for the heaviest sins by undergoing a heavy process of atonement and one should atone for lighter sins by undergoing lighter atonement. **Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, however, vanquishes all the effects of sinful activities, regardless of whether heavy or light.**

6.2.17 **Although one may neutralize the reactions to sinful life through austerity, charity, vows, and other such methods, these pious activities cannot uproot the material diseases in one's heart.** However, if one serves the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of God, he is immediately freed from all such contaminations.

We should note again here, that although the word “immediately” is used here, the service spoken of here is that of uttamā-bhakti, as described later in this lesson. As we practice sādhana-bhakti, advancing toward pure bhakti, our material diseases will definitely be treated and weakened, but, should we give up the path or perform it insincerely, some traces of material desires may remain.

6.2.18 **As fire burns dry grass to ashes, so the holy name of the Lord, whether chanted knowingly or unknowingly, burns to ashes, without fail, all the reactions of one's sinful activities.**

Here we can note that while one's sinful reactions are burnt away, thus eliminating hellish sufferings, one's reactions to pious karma, which can still result in the contamination of material desires, may remain until one purifies his engagement in the chanting process and other bhakti practices, such as seeking the shelter of Śrī guru.

6.2.19 **If a person unaware of the effectiveness of a potent medicine takes that medicine or is forced to take it, it will act even without his knowledge because its potency does not depend on the patients understanding how it works.**

Similarly, even if one does not understand the value of chanting the holy name of the Lord, if one chants knowingly or unknowingly the chanting will be effective.

6.2.20 Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: Having thus perfectly judged the principles of devotional service with reasoning and arguments, the order carriers of Lord Viṣṇu released the brāhmaṇa Ajāmila from the bondage of the Yamadūtas and saved him from imminent death.

6.2.21 My dear Mahārāja Parikṣit, O subduer of all enemies, after the servants of Yamarāja had been answered by the order carriers of Lord Viṣṇu, they went to Yamarāja and explained to him everything that had happened.

6.2.22 Having been released from the nooses of the Yamadūtas, the brāhmaṇa Ajāmila, now free from fear, came to his senses and immediately offered obeisance's to the Viṣṇudūtas by bowing his head at their lotus feet. He was extremely pleased by their presence for he had seen them save his life from the hands of the Yamadūtas.

6.2.23 O sinless Mahārāja Parikṣit, the order carriers of the Supreme Personality of God, the Viṣṇudūtas, saw that Ajāmila

was attempting to say something, and thus they immediately disappeared from his presence.

The reason for their disappearance is given by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

“To increase Ajāmila's eagerness to glorify the Lord, they disappeared so that he would feel separation in their absence. In the mood of separation, glorification of the Lord is very intense”

6.2.24-25 After hearing the discourse between the Yamadūtas and the Viṣṇudūtas, Ajāmila could understand how dharma acts under the influence of the three guṇas. These principles are mentioned in the Vedas. He could also understand the transcendental religious principles, which are not affected by the guṇas and which concern the relationship between the living being, [the mahā-mantra], and the Supreme Personality of God. Furthermore, Ajāmila heard the glorification of the name, fame, qualities, and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of God. He thus became a perfectly pure devotee. He could then remember his past sinful activities, which he greatly regretted having performed.

6.2.26 Ajāmila said: Alas being a servant of my senses how degraded I became! I fell down from my positions as a duly qualified brāhmaṇa and begot children in the womb of a prostitute.

6.2.27 Alas, all condemnation upon me! I acted so sinfully that I degraded my family tradition. Indeed, I gave up my chaste and beautiful wife to have sexual intercourse with a fallen prostitute accustomed to drinking wine. All condemnation upon me!

In explaining this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us:

This is the mentality of one who is becoming a pure devotee. When one is elevated to the platform of devotional service by the grace of the Lord and the guru, one first regrets his past sinful activities. This helps one advance in spiritual life... The duty of a pure devotee is to regret his past sinful activities in illicit sex, intoxication, meat eating, and gambling. Not only should one give up his past bad habits, but he must always regret his past sinful acts. This is the standard of pure devotion.

6.2.28 Ajāmila continued: My father and mother were old and had no other son or friend to look after them. Because I did not take care of them, they lived with great difficulty. Alas, like an abominable lower class man, I left them in that condition.

6.2.29 It is now clear, that as a consequence of such activities, a sinful person like me must be thrown into the hellish conditions meant for those who have broken religious principles and must therefore suffer extreme miseries

6.2.30 Was this a dream I saw or was this a reality? I saw fearsome men with ropes in their hands coming to drag me away. Where have they gone?

6.2.31 And where have those four liberated and very beautiful persons gone who released me from arrest and saved me from being dragged down to the hellish regions?

6.2.32 I am certainly most abominable and unfortunate to have merged into an ocean of sinful activities, but nevertheless, because of my previous spiritual activities I could see those four exalted persons who came to rescue me. Now I feel exceedingly happy because of their visit.

6.2.33 Were it not for my past devotional service, how could I, a most unclean keeper of a prostitute, have gotten the opportunity to chant the name of the Lord of Vaikuntha when I was ready to die? Certainly, it could not have been possible.

6.2.34 Ajāmila continued: I am a shameless cheater who has killed his brāhmaṇical culture. Indeed, I am sin personified. Where am I in comparison to the all-auspicious chanting of the holy name of Lord Nārāyaṇa?

In explaining this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda makes comments

similar in nature to what our inmate contributor shared in last month's lesson, where he asked, "Where would I be if I had not been arrested?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda says:

Those involved in broadcasting the holy name of Nārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa, through the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should always consider what our position was before we came and what it is now. We had fallen into abominable lives as meat-eaters, drunkards, and women-hunters who performed all kinds of sinful activities, but now we have been given the opportunity to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Therefore, we should always appreciate this opportunity... we must be conscious of the difference between our present and past conditions and should always be very careful not to fall from the most exalted life."

In these last two quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda, he has told us that we are not to forget our past. We are to remain aware of it while we simultaneously regret our former misbehavior and compare our lives then to our current state. These two things will help us be aware of the blessings we have received and they will thus help us to both appreciate our superior position and to keep ourselves from falling from it and returning to our former ways. These truths are fortified in Ajāmila's next statements.

6.2.35 *I am such a sinful person, but since I have now gotten this opportunity, I must completely control my mind, life, and senses and always engage in devotional service so that I may not fall again into the deep darkness and ignorance of material life.*

Śrīla Prabhupāda says: *Every one of us should have this determination. We have been elevated to an exalted position by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and Śrī guru, and if we remember that this is a great opportunity and pray to Kṛṣṇa that we will not fall again, our lives will be successful.*

6.2.36-37 *Ajāmila continued: Because of identifying oneself with the body, one is subjected to desires for sense gratification and thus one engages in many types of pious and impious action. This is what constitutes material bondage. Now I shall disentangle myself from my material bondage, which has been caused by māyā, in the form of a woman. Being a most fallen soul, I was victimized by māyā and have become as a dancing dog led around by a woman's hand. Now I shall give up all lusty desires and free myself from this illusion. I shall become a merciful, well-wishing friend to all living entities and always absorb myself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.*

In explaining this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda points out the importance of preaching the path of absorbing the mind in Kṛṣṇa to others, and in doing so, he refers to the "Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement". We must not be sectarian and consider that this refers to any singular or specific organization. The organization begun by Śrīla Prabhupāda was called "The International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness" (ISKCON), whereas the organization built by disciples of Śrīla Gurudeva is called "The International Pure Bhakti Yoga Society" (IPBYS). Since both of these organizations were originally designed to spread the teachings of Lord Caitanya, they both are part of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement that Śrīla Prabhupāda will refer to in this next quote.

In fact, in one of his books, Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks of the fact that there are many bona-fide organizations within this movement, telling us:

"There are many societies and associations of pure devotees, and if someone with just a little faith begins to associate with such societies, his advancement to pure devotional service is rapid." (Nectar of Devotion Ch. 19)

Returning to his quote, he explains the highest type of

mercy that we can show to others. After Ajāmila says that he will become a merciful, well-wishing friend to others and always absorb himself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Śrīla Prabhupāda says:

This should be the standard of determination for all Kṛṣṇa conscious persons. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person should free himself from the clutches of māyā, and he should also be compassionate to all others suffering in those clutches. The activities of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are not meant only for oneself but for others also. This is the perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One who is interested in his own salvation is not as advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness as one who feels compassion for others and therefore, propagates the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Such an advanced devotee will never fall down, for Kṛṣṇa will give him special protection. This is the sum and substance of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Everyone is like a play toy in the hands of the illusory energy (māyā) and is acting as she moves him. One should come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness to release oneself and also to release others"

Both Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Gurudeva followed the preaching path, spending all of their final years circling the globe to deliver the message of Lord Caitanya to others. It is due to their instructions and inspiring examples that we at the IPBYS Prison Outreach program make our humble and insignificant attempts to follow in their footsteps and share this message with you.

Returning now to the history of Ajāmila, we find him discussing his realization of the fact that he is now in a superior position, and how he plans to move forward in his life.

6.2.38 *Ajāmila continued: Simply because I chanted the holy name of the Lord, my heart is now becoming purified. Therefore, I shall not fall victim again to the false lures of material sense gratification. Now that I have become fixed in the Absolute Truth, henceforward I shall not identify myself with the body. I shall give up false conceptions of "I" and "mine" and fix my mind on the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.*

6.2.39 *Because of a moment's association with devotees [the Viṣṇudūtas], Ajāmila detached himself from the material conception of life with determination. Thus freed from all material attraction, he immediately started for Hardwar (a holy city).*

6.2.40 *In Hardwar, Ajāmila took shelter at a Viṣṇu temple, where he executed the process of bhakti-yoga. He controlled his senses and fully applied his mind in the service of the Lord.*

6.2.41 *Ajāmila fully engaged in devotional service. Thus, he detached his mind from the process of sense gratification and became fully absorbed in thinking of the form of the Lord.*

6.2.42 *When his intelligence and mind were fixed upon the form of the Lord, Ajāmila once again saw before him four celestial persons. He could understand that they were those he had seen previously, and thus he offered them his obeisances by bowing down before them.*

6.2.43 *Upon seeing the Viṣṇudūtas, Ajāmila gave up his material body at Hardwar on the bank of the Ganges. He regained his original spiritual body, which was a body appropriate for an associate of the Lord.*

6.2.44 *Accompanied by the order carriers of Lord Viṣṇu, Ajāmila boarded an airplane made of gold. Passing through the airways, he went directly to the abode of Viṣṇu, the husband of the goddess of fortune.*

6.2.45 *Ajāmila was a brāhmaṇa who, because of bad association, had given up all brāhmaṇical culture and religious principles (his naimittika-dharma). Becoming most fallen, he stole, drank and performed other abominable acts. He even kept a prostitute. Thus, he was destined to be carried*

away to hell by the Yamadūtas, but he was immediately rescued by a glimpse of chanting the holy name Nārāyaṇa. (Here, “a glimpse of chanting”, refers to the shadow chanting we discussed where we say the name while meaning to indicate something else.)

6.2.46 **Therefore, one who desires freedom from material bondage should adopt the process of chanting and glorifying the name, fame, form, and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of God, at whose feet all holy places stand. One cannot derive the proper benefit from other methods, such as pious atonement, speculative knowledge, and meditation in mystic yoga, because even after following such methods one takes to fruitive activities again, unable to control his mind, which is contaminated by the lower guṇas, namely passion and ignorance.**

6.2.47-48 **Because this very confidential historical narration has the potency to vanquish all sinful reactions, one who hears or describes it with faith and devotion is no longer doomed to hellish life, regardless of his having a material body and regardless of how sinful he may have been. Indeed, the Yamadūtas, who carry out the orders of Yamarāja, do not approach him even to see him. After giving up his body, he returns home, back to Godhead, where he is very respectfully received.**

6.2.49 While suffering at the time of death, Ajāmila chanted the holy name of the Lord, and although the chanting was directed toward his son (shadow chanting), he nevertheless returned home, back to Godhead. Therefore, if one faithfully and inoffensively chants the holy name of the Lord, where is the doubt that he will return to Godhead?

Yamarāja Instructs His Messengers

6.3.1 King Parikṣit said: O Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Yamarāja is the controller of all living entities in terms of punishing those who fail to perform their religious duties, but his servants failed to perform his order. When his servants, the Yamadūtas, informed him of their defeat by the Viṣṇudūtas, who stopped them from arresting Ajāmila, what did he reply?

6.3.2 O great sage, never before has it been heard anywhere that an order of Yamarāja has failed. Therefore, I think that people will have doubts about this that no one but you can eradicate. Since that is my firm conviction, kindly explain the reasons for these events.

6.3.3 Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī replied: My dear king, when the Yamadūtas were baffled and defeated by the Viṣṇudūtas, they approached Yamarāja, the master of sinful persons, to tell him of this incident.

6.3.4 The Yamadūtas said: Our dear lord, how many controllers or rulers are there in this material world? How many causes are responsible for manifesting the various results of activities performed under the guṇas?

6.3.5 If in this universe there are many rulers and justices who disagree about punishment and reward, their contradictory actions will neutralize each other and no one will be punished or rewarded. Otherwise, if their contradictory acts fail to neutralize each other, everyone will have to be both punished and rewarded.

6.3.6 Since there are many different people performing karma, there may be different judges or rulers to give them justice, but just as one central emperor controls different departmental rulers, there must be one supreme controller to guide all judges.

6.3.7 The supreme judge must be one, not many. It was our understanding that you are the supreme judge and that you have jurisdiction even over the demigods. Our impression was that you are the master of all living entities, the supreme authority who discriminates between the śubha-karma and the aśubha-karma of all human beings.

6.3.8 But now we see that the punishment ordained under your authority is no longer effective, since your order has been transgressed by four wonderful and perfect persons.

6.3.9 We were bringing the most sinful Ajāmila toward the hellish planets, following your order, when those beautiful persons forcibly cut the knots of the ropes with which we were arresting him.

6.3.10 As soon as the sinful Ajāmila uttered the name Nārāyaṇa, these four beautiful men immediately arrived and reassured him, saying: “Do not fear. Do not fear.” We wish to know about them from your Lordship. If you think we are able to understand them, kindly describe who they are.

6.3.11 Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: Thus having been questioned, Lord Yamarāja, the judge of the living entities, was very pleased with his order carriers because of hearing them say the holy name Nārāyaṇa. He remembered the lotus feet of the Lord and began to reply.

6.3.12 Yamarāja said: **My dear servants, you have accepted me as the Supreme, but factually, I am not. Above me, and above all the other demigods, is the one supreme master and controller. The partial manifestations of His personality are those who create, maintain, and destroy the material universes. He is like the two threads that form the length and breadth of a woven cloth. The entire world is controlled by Him, just as a bull is controlled by a rope in its nose.**

6.3.13 Just as the driver of a bullock cart ties ropes through the ring in the nostril of his bulls to control them; the Supreme Personality of God binds all men through the ropes of His words in the Vedas, which set forth the names and activities of the distinct orders of human society. In fear, the members of all these orders worship the Supreme Lord by offering him presentations according to their respective activities.

6.3.14-15 I, Yamarāja, and all the other demigods and great sages that are in charge of maintaining the departmental affairs of the universe are all certainly free from the influence of the lower guṇas, passion and ignorance. Nevertheless, although we are influenced by the guṇa of goodness, we cannot understand all of the activities of the Supreme Personality of God. What, then, is to be said of others, who, under the influence of māyā, merely speculate in their attempts to understand God?

6.3.16 As the different limbs of the body cannot see the eyes, the living entities cannot see the Supreme Lord, who is situated as the Supersoul in everyone’s heart. Not by the senses, by the mind, by thoughts within the heart, or by discussion can the jīvas ascertain the real situation of the Supreme Lord.

6.3.17 **The Supreme Personality of God is self-sufficient and fully independent. He is the master of everyone and everything, including māyā. He has His own form, qualities, and features, and similarly, His order carriers, the Viṣṇudūtas, who are very beautiful, possess bodily features, transcendental qualities, and transcendental nature almost like His. They thus wonder within this world with a great deal of independence.**

6.3.18 The order carriers of Lord Viṣṇu, who are worshipped even by the demigods, possess wonderful bodily features exactly like those of Viṣṇu and are very rarely seen. The Viṣṇudūtas protect the devotees of the Lord from the hands of enemies, from envious persons, and even from my jurisdiction, as well as from natural disturbances

6.3.19 Real religious principles (dharma) are given by the Supreme Personality of God. Although fully situated under the guṇa of goodness, even the great sages who occupy the topmost material planets cannot ascertain the real religious principles, nor can the demigods, or the leaders of the topmost material planet, to say nothing of the demons, ordinary

humans, or other inhabitants of the material worlds.

6.3.20-21 Lord Brahmā (the demigod in charge of creation within each material universe), Nārāḍa Muni (the transcendental spaceman-see Lesson 10), Lord Śiva (a slightly tainted manifestation of Viṣṇu who is responsible for the devastation of the material universes), the four Kumāras (the first four sons of Lord Brahmā), Lord Kapila (a manifestation of Viṣṇu), Svāyambhuva Manu (the first progenitor of humanity—the word “man” is derived from his name) Prahlāda Mahārāja (a great devotee), Janaka Mahārāja (a great devotee), Grandfather Bhīṣma (a great devotee), Śukadeva Gosvāmī (a great devotee—the narrator of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam), and I myself know the real religious principles. **My dear servants, the highest dharma, which is known as bhāgavat-dharma, or love-drenched service to the Supreme Personality of God, is uncontaminated by the guṇas. It is very confidential and difficult for ordinary human beings to understand, but if by chance one fortunately understands it, he is immediately liberated, and thus he returns home, back to Godhead.**

NOTE: The fifteen great personalities mentioned above each have their own separate histories that are given in the Vedas. While we do not wish to introduce them here, over time, you will likely learn of them all as you travel along on your journey to prema.

6.3.22 Bhakti-yoga, beginning with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, is the ultimate religious principle (dharma) for the living entity in human society.

We have highlighted this entire verse because these are the type of clear, simple, and totally definitive verses that prove the supreme position that the science of bhakti-yoga holds. Practitioners of other systems may try to pick and choose a verse or two from here and there, or they may try to distort various statements to support their beliefs, but the Vedas repeatedly state, with verses such as this, that the topmost path is bhakti.

We also note that the dharma spoken of here is nitya-dharma. Both the purest function and the eternal purpose of the jīva is to perform love-drenched service to the Lord. This is true, not only of overall engagement in bhakti, but also for the chanting of the Holy Names, for both the personal associates of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the Divine Couple Themselves all chant the Holy Names as a part of their activities and meditations.

Returning to the instructions of Yamarāja, we find him continuing to speak on the glories of the Holy Names.

6.3.23 *My dear servants, who are as good as my sons, just see how glorious is the chanting of the holy name of the Lord. The greatly sinful Ajāmila chanted only to call his son, not knowing that he was chanting the holy name. Nevertheless, by chanting the holy name of the Lord, he remembered Nārāyaṇa, and thus he was immediately saved from the ropes of death.*

6.3.24 **Therefore it should be understood that one is really relieved from all sinful reactions by chanting the holy name of the Lord and chanting of His qualities and pastimes. This is the only process recommended for relief from sinful reactions. Even if one chants the holy name of the Lord with improper pronunciation, he will achieve relief from material bondage if he chants without offenses. Ajāmila, for example, was extremely sinful, but while dying he merely chanted the holy name, and although calling his son, he achieved complete liberation because he remembered the name of Nārāyaṇa.**

6.3.25 *Those whose intelligence has been bewildered by māyā create paths which focus on the sections of the Vedas that*

describe the path of kāmīya-karma (activities and worship aimed at personal gains), and thus they can never understand the true path of religion (the pure dharma) described by those who understand these truths. (The personalities mentioned in Verses 6.3.20-21) They cannot understand the value of bhakti or of chanting the holy names. Because their minds are attracted to performing the rituals that lead to satisfying their senses, their intelligence has become dull. In this state, they remain busy trying to attain temporary things. They are not attracted to the sankīrtana movement (of Lord Caitanya); instead, they are only interested in naimittika-dharma, gaining material possessions, satisfying their senses, and temporarily mitigating their suffering.

6.3.26 *Considering all these points, therefore, intelligent men decide all problems by adopting the devotional process of chanting the holy names of the Lord, who is situated in everyone's heart and who is a mine of auspicious qualities. Such person is not within my jurisdiction for punishment. Generally, they never commit sinful activities, but even if by mistake or because of bewilderment or illusion they sometimes commit sinful acts, they are protected from sinful reactions because they always chant the holy names.*

6.3.27 *My dear servant, please do not approach such devotees, for they have fully surrendered to the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of God. They are equal to everyone and their glories are sung by the demigods and the inhabitants of the highest material planets. Please do not even go near them. They are always protected by the club of the Supreme Personality of God, and therefore Lord Brahmā and I, and even the time factor are not competent to chastise them.*

6.3.28 *Such exalted persons have no taste for material enjoyment and they drink the honey of the lotus feet of the Lord. My dear servants, bring to me for punishment only those persons who are averse to the taste of that honey, who do not associate with devotees, and who are attached to family life and material enjoyment, which forms the path to hell.*

6.3.29 *My dear servants, please bring me only those sinful persons who do not use their tongues to chant the holy name and qualities of Kṛṣṇa, whose hearts do not remember the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa even once, and whose heads do not bow down even once before Lord Kṛṣṇa. Send me those who do not perform their duties toward Viṣṇu, which are the only duties in human life. Please bring me all such fools and rascals.*

6.3.30 *[Then Yamarāja, considering himself and his servants to be offenders, spoke as follows, begging pardon from the Lord.] O my Lord, my servants have surely committed a great offense by arresting a Vaiṣṇava such as Ajāmila. O Nārāyaṇa, O supreme and oldest person, please forgive us. Because of our ignorance, we failed to recognize Ajāmila as a servant of Your Lordship, and thus we have certainly committed a great offense. Therefore, with folded hands, we beg your pardon. My dear Lord, since You are supremely merciful and always full of good qualities, please pardon us. We offer our respectful obeisance's unto You.*

6.3.31 *Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: My dear king, the chanting of the holy name of the Lord is able to uproot even the reactions of the greatest sins. Therefore, the chanting of the sankīrtana movement is the most auspicious activity in the entire universe. Please try to understand this so that others will take it seriously.*

6.3.32 *One who constantly hears and chants the holy name of the Lord and chants about His activities can very easily attain the platform of pure bhakti, which can cleanse the dirt from one's heart. One cannot achieve such purification merely by observing vows and performing Vedic ritualistic*

ceremonies.

6.3.33 *Devotees who always lick the honey from the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa do not care at all for material activities, which are performed under the influence of the guṇas and which bring only misery. Indeed, devotees never give up the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa to return to material activities. Others, however, who are addicted to Vedic rituals, are enchanted by lusty desires because they have neglected the lotus feet of the Lord. Although they sometimes perform acts of atonement, they return to sinful activities again and again because they never become completely purified.*

6.3.34 *After hearing from the mouth of their master about the extraordinary glories of the Lord and His name, fame, and attributes, the Yamadūtas were struck with wonder. Since then, as soon as they see a devotee, they fear him and dare not look at him again.*

6.3.35 *Sukadeva Gosvāmī concluded by telling Mahārāja Parikṣit: When the great sage Agastya, the son of Kumbha, was residing in the Malya Hills and worshipping the Supreme Personality of God, I approached him, and he explained this confidential history to me.*

Thus ends the Third Chapter of the sixth canto of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

This historical account of how the sinful Ajāmila was saved from the hellish planets by indirectly chanting the Holy Names as he called to his son at the moment of death teaches us just some of the wonderful glories of the Holy Names, for by chanting them purely and in the proper mood, while also fixing the mind on pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, these same names will not just save us from punishment, but they will also assist us in becoming situated in our individually specific, eternal, and original form and personality, (svarūpa) which, as we explained last month, is one of the aspects of our true goal of life.

As you reread and study this lesson, be sure to accept these truths with faith. Do not doubt that these incredible powers exist in the Holy Names because one of the reasons the Names had the effect they did in Ajāmila's life was that, even though his chanting was not pure, it was at least devoid of offenses. However, if we doubt the power of the Holy Names, if we consider these truths to be exaggerations, then we commit an offense to the Holy Names, as we discussed Lessons 7 and 8, and if we chant offensively, these same powers will not be in effect.

We hope these truths will help you decide to increase (or begin) chanting the Holy Names.

We would also like to point out that, as we mentioned in Lesson 16, the truths of the Vedas are often revealed gradually, and thus, although avoiding the reactions to our sins and escaping the cycle of birth and death are rewards that are automatically bestowed upon these who chant the Holy Names, these are not what we set as our goals or focus our practices upon.

In next month's lesson, we are going to share many quotes from exalted and pure devotees that should help you to understand this truth. But for now, let's move on to the second half of this lesson, where we'll be taking an in depth and detailed look at the characteristics of that bhakti that is located entirely in the spiritual dimension and totally beyond the influence of the forces that bind us to this world, shape our personalities, and control our actions (the guṇas) as we live lives of illusion in the material worlds.

“Pure” Bhakti

In last month's lesson, we shared a detailed and in depth look at the various types of bhakti. We spoke about mixed

(miśrā) bhakti, shadow (chāyā) bhakti, the reflection (pratibimba) of bhakti (which was not bhakti at all), and we also shared some terms that represent these forms of bhakti in other ways as well. (sakāma—with personal desires: saṅga—with/under the influence for the binding forces of māyā, the guṇas). We pray that you accepted the instruction of Śrīla Gurudeva to learn about all of the forms of what bhakti is not, for in this way you will be able to not make the mistake spending your valuable time in performing acts that will not lead you toward prema.

Of course, as a part of those descriptions, we also spoke about some of the lesser forms of bhakti that, although not pure, will at least assist us in moving in the right direction. We told you how, in our early days on the bhakti path, it is helpful to at least superimpose/project (āropa) proper views (such as the fact that the Deity (arca-vigraha) is a fully conscious and complete form of the Lord, even before we are able to realize this. And we also discussed that type of bhakti, where our practices are still mixed with other desires, but since our desire to please the Lord is the predominating motive behind our acts, they at least become bhakti to some extent.

It is important for us to learn these truths and we hope that you have taken shelter of Śrī guru and carefully studied them.

This month, we're going to go into even greater detail about what bhakti is. As with last month's lesson, we're also going to be introducing quite a few Sanskrit terms as well, and we hope that the many explanations that we've given as to why we need to use the terms has convinced you to do your best to learn them. Of course, in addition to using these terms, we'll also do our best to provide you with English words that we can use in our efforts to understand the science of bhakti-yoga, but there is no doubt that we will gain a much more complete grasp of these truths if we are able to absorb the fully detailed meaning of the Sanskrit terms when we study and meditate upon these truths.

Having once again shared this important learning tip with you, let's join together and use another, even more critical aide in our studies. Let's close our eyes for a moment, hold this lesson to our heart, and ask both Śrīla Gurudeva and all of the other ācāryas in our line to help these truths become a part of who we are.

We entitled this section “Pure” Bhakti, and we notated the word “Pure” because this is a most basic, and yet also a very complete way of expressing what bhakti is.

As we mentioned above, in describing what bhakti is not, we used the terms “saṅga” and “sakāma”. By this, we can reasonably deduce the fact that real bhakti, true bhakti, “pure bhakti” must be beyond the influence of the guṇas and devoid of all desires to satisfy our own senses, and of course, as you should know by now, there are Sanskrit words to describe these states as well.

When we talked about karma-yoga, we used the term “**niṣkāma**” telling you that it meant “**without desires to satisfy the senses**”. We can also express this by saying that niṣkāma means “**without any personal or selfish motivation**”.

A similar term is used to express the opposite of saṅga. When we are totally under the influence of the guṇas, we are called “saṅga”, but when **our thoughts (which includes our motives), our words, and our deeds are totally free from the influences of the guṇas they are called “nirguṇa”**.

So these two words—niṣkāma and nirguṇa—can both be used in describing what pure bhakti is, and yet, upon closer examination, we find that the word “nirguṇa”, in and of itself, also included niṣkāma. This is because kāma, our selfish motivation to satisfy the senses only arises in our heart because we are under the influence of the guṇas. Remove the guṇas,

and our kāma, our lust, automatically disappears as well.

We have pointed this truth out because this concept of escaping from the influence of the guṇas as being an integral part of pure bhakti will continue to appear as we further examine this subject.

Before we go on to discuss more details, and bring in more terms that describe what pure bhakti is, let's take a few minutes to imagine what it would be like to be nirguṇa, and thus, to be niṣkāma as well.

Let's picture ourselves waking up one morning with absolutely zero desires to satisfy our senses in any way. Can you imagine what that would be like? Think about it for a minute. What would motivate you to get out of bed? What would it be that would give you the drive you needed to "do" something?

If we are honest, this state is very hard for most of us to imagine. The real us, our souls, our ātmās, have been deeply concealed by māyā and her guṇas since a time without beginning, and it has been her forces of influence, her guṇas that have been acting as the puppet masters, pulling our strings and making us dance to her tune of illusions.

The spiritual advisor of the IPBYS Prison Outreach Program, the artist we've spoken of before, was inspired by Śrīla Prabhupāda to express this mental picture we just painted for you.



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When māyā first bewitched us and covered our prema with a false ego, we experienced the thought of "I am an enjoyer", and thus, for countless births, we've wandered here and there trying to enjoy, and, in this deluded state, we wake up every morning thinking, "How will I enjoy today", (even though we may not realize that this is the motive behind everything we

do).

So again, let's wake up without this motive. We no longer want to "cook up a good meal for breakfast". We no longer want to "earn a good living" so that we'll be able to buy things to give us pleasure. We no longer want to do our exercises so we can "look good" in our efforts to entice others into have sex with us.

Just try to imagine yourself lying there at the start of your day with no desires to seek any pleasure, of any kind, for your senses to enjoy. Have you figured out what that would be like?

Let's leave this "point to ponder" behind, as we continue to look at what pure bhakti is, and how, by becoming situated in that state, we find ourselves filled with entirely new, and much more satisfying reasons to get out of bed in the morning.

In a moment, we are going to share an absolutely amazing verse with you. This Sanskrit truth was first spoken by Lord Caitanya during the time when He was passing His teachings on to our beloved founding father, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, who then, having fully realized this truth, would later record it in one of the many books he wrote.

The conversation where this truth was shared is recorded in the scholarly biography of Lord Caitanya, the Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta (CC), and it was also, as we said, recorded by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. We will therefore list both of these books as the source for this verse. We also mention this seemingly small detail to let you know that although you may find places where this teaching is only referenced as being given to us by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, it was originally given to him by the Supreme Authority, the Lord Himself, and thus it stands as the perfect representation and the final word on what "pure" bhakti truly is.

In addition, as we did before, when we discussed the different types of true and false bhakti, we want to share with you what Śrīla Gurudeva tells us about learning the verse that tells us what pure bhakti is. He tells us.

"It is the duty of a person desiring bhakti to remember this verse and to repeat it daily. He should try to enter deeply into its meaning and practice to develop its understanding."

Here he shares a truth that we have expressed many times before. He tells us that in order to develop an understanding of this verse we will need to enter deeply into its meaning (by studying, meditating, and these truths) and we will also need to practice what it teaches as well. Understanding involves action.

If we can do this, if we can understand this verse, we will also understand what will motivate us in the morning when we are no longer being pushed and pulled around by the guṇas and our personal desires.

When we read/study these truths, we are to do as Śrīla Gurudeva has explained above. **We are to "enter deeply into" them.** We've discussed how this can be done before and we've told you the most critical aspect of this is to do so with the mercy and guidance of Śrī guru, but there is another helpful tool that we can also use as well, and in fact, this aide puts an interesting twist on the idea of "entering deeply into" Lord Caitanya's conversation with Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

We do not have to read these words from the page as we sit in whatever surroundings we find ourselves in. We do not have to think we are alone or that we are in some place that we would rather not be. Instead, we can picture ourselves right there with Lord Caitanya and His dear disciple and we can "listen in" as He speaks these truths to us as well. We can "enter into" both the words/meanings of this truth and into the surroundings and mood as well if we place our hearts at Lord Caitanya's lotus feet and whole-heartedly absorb, with every particle of our consciousness, the teachings He so merciful reveals to us.

So join us now in the holy city of Prayāga, where the two sacred rivers, the Ganges and the Yamunā meet, as we sit with these two great personalities and listen in on/deeply enter into their conversation.

The Verse Before “THE VERSE”

Lord Caitanya says:

*‘śuddha bhakti’ haite haya ‘prema’ utpanna
ataeva śuddha-bhaktira kahiye ‘lakṣana’*

“The performance of pure bhakti results in the attainment of prema; therefore, let Me describe some of the symptoms of pure bhakti.” (C.C. Madhya 19.166)

This verse, which was spoken in Bengali, tells us exactly why it is that we need to follow Śrīla Gurudeva’s instructions to remember the next verse we will share, to repeat it daily, and to deeply enter into both its meaning and the practices it describes.

The goal of our life is prema, here Lord Caitanya tells us these facts: **by performing pure bhakti, we will develop prema**. He then tells us that He will describe some of the symptoms of pure bhakti to us. In other words, **in this simple verse, He is going to explain the path (abhidheya/sādhana) that will allow us to reach the goal of life**. If we are wise enough to desire to reach this goal, then surely we can understand why it is critical for us to understand the symptoms of what pure bhakti is.

The Symptoms of Pure Bhakti

Lord Caitanya says:

*anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyaṁ jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena Kṛṣṇānu śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*
(CC Madhya 19.167/Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.11)

Before we share an English translation of this verse, we want to make a special mention of something we’ve discussed before because it is a definite factor in the translating of this verse.

Sanskrit words can have many meanings. In some cases, even the most basic of these meanings can be difficult to convey in English terms, and, once we begin to include deeper meanings and shades of meanings, giving simple and yet accurate translations of even a single word can be a difficult thing to do.

When this factor is multiplied by all of the words in a verse, and again multiplied by all of the ways these words can combine to create various meanings, the task of conveying such profound truths in simple terms becomes very, very difficult.

We also note that even in the books of our ācāryas, and sometimes even within the same book, this verse, and other verses as well have been translated in a variety of ways. This further increases the challenge we face in trying to give you the correct translation of the verse.

This is also why as noted in the two **bold** words above, we are only claiming to share an English translation, and not the English translation with you.

The translation we will share is taken from the various one’s given by our ācāryas and we use it because we feel it best conveys the basic meaning of the verse, and that it does so in a way that will hopefully be within the teachings that we have thus far presented to you.

After we share this basic translation with you, we will do as our ācāryas have done. We will go through this verse explaining the meaning of each word, both individually and in combination with the other words used, and then, after that lengthy discourse, we will share another, more detailed translation that includes most (but not all) of the meanings of

this verse. Having thus presented a short, a long, and a medium sized look at this verse, we hope to give you plenty of ways to study and absorb these important teachings of Lord Caitanya.

The first half of this verse contains the secondary symptoms of pure bhakti; in other words, it tells us what pure bhakti is not. The second half describes the primary symptoms; what pure bhakti is. However, in translating it into English, our ācāryas have given the primary symptoms first, and thus we will follow this pattern as well.

In teaching us the symptoms of pure bhakti, which results in the attainment of prema, Lord Caitanya says:

Continuous (anu) emotion filled endeavors (śīlanam) to render service (bhakti) to the topmost, cowherd boy form of the Lord (Kṛṣṇa), which are done out of genuine kindness toward Him and without any unfavorable mood (ānukūlyena) is first class (uttamā) bhakti. Additionally, while in one’s normal state of mind (ita), one must be completely devoid of (śūnyaṁ) all selfish desires and ulterior motives (anyābhilāsa), and his endeavors must not be eclipsed by (anāvṛtam) any activities (karma), knowledge (jñāna), or other so-called spiritual practice (ādī) that hinders one’s progress on the pure path to prema.

When one’s endeavors meet all of these qualifications, they are beyond (ut) the influence of the guṇas (tamo), and they constitute the pure (śuddha) bhakti that leads to prema.

In further analyzing this verse, we first need to be aware of the fact that this same description of first class bhakti can be applied to all three levels of bhakti: sādhana (the stage of practice); bhāva (the stage where prema has begun to awaken); and prema-bhakti as well. Therefore, depending on which stage it is describing, the critical factor mentioned early on in the translation, **“emotionally filled endeavors”**, will vary in the intensity of those emotions, depending on which type of bhakti is being described.

In sādhana-bhakti, our true spiritual emotions will be somewhat shallow and also fleeting, but still we are encouraged to cultivate them. At bhāva-bhakti, our emotions will be deeper and more consistent, and upon the attainment of prema-bhakti, they will actually be the all-consuming factor that motivates our entire existence.

Also, as we will see, since Lord Caitanya was describing the symptoms of that pure bhakti that leads to prema, all of the secondary symptoms, what pure bhakti is not, cannot possibly exist in prema-bhakti, and only very slightly and infrequently will they exist at bhāva-bhakti, however, as we practice and prepare to achieve these states, during the stage of sādhana-bhakti, we will have to be constantly on the lookout for these obstacles on our path.

Having pointed out that this verse applies in different ways to the three levels of bhakti, let’s begin to dive ever more deeply into the truths it contains.

The Verb-Root “Śīl”—Disengagement and Engagement

In analyzing this verse, our ācāryas have broken down the words and explained how the grammatical rules of Sanskrit produce a variety of meanings. While we will avoid some of those details, we will rely upon an explanation of this verse given to us by **Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja**, the dīkṣā (initiating) and śikṣā (instructing) guru of Śrīla Gurudeva to help us explain these truths to you.

His work appeared in the periodical “Śrī Gauḍīyā Patrikā”: Year 1, Issue 3, 1949, and, while we will use some of his direct quotes, we will also paraphrase some of the truths he has presented to us. (As usual, the quotes will appear in *italics*)

The translation he shared began by speaking of continuous (anu) emotion filled endeavors (śīl).

The verb-root “śīl” is interpreted as “repeated or

permanent exercise or discipline”. By this interpretation, śil is conceived of as having progress or engagement as its essential characteristics.

According to another rule of grammar, *śil is interpreted as “profound stillness or concentration of thought, or intense contemplation of a particular object” (samādhi). By this interpretation, śil is conceived of as having withdrawal or disengagement as its essential characteristic.*

Active Efforts and Emotional States of Being

The expression of bhakti is accomplished both through active efforts and emotional states of being (bhāva). The verb root śil accounts for both of these features of bhakti.

This verse therefore expresses, even within its description of the primary symptoms of pure bhakti, a mention of what pure bhakti is not.

When it speaks of progress or engagement, “it” refers to both actions performed by the body, mind, and words, and to the emotions that drive these actions, and by “actions”, it refers only to the activities of bhakti such as hearing about the Lord, remembering Him, chanting His names, etc.

When it speaks of “withdrawal or disengagement”, it refers to both refraining from all offensive activities and also to withdrawing one’s thoughts from all other objects in order to focus them exclusively on the Lord and His service.

These same principles apply to the interpretation of śil in regards to one’s emotional states (bhāvas) as well. In pure bhakti, our emotions are to be exclusively engaged in the moods that support and nourish our bhakti and completely disengaged from all temporary and material focus.

By this, we can also begin to understand why the symptoms of pure bhakti includes defining “uttamā” as “beyond” (ut) the guṇas (tamo—the guṇa of ignorance is use here to represent all of the guṇas).

When our activities, thoughts, words, and emotions are directed toward the Lord and His service, they slowly but surely accomplish many things all at the same time. They cut our attachments, the ropes that bind us to the material world. They remove the other obstacles (anāthas) on our journey to prema. They help us develop a taste (ruci) for our spiritual practices. They create an attachment (āśakti) to our bhakti practices and also to the Lord and His associates. They water the seed of prema until it sprouts and we feel the first signs of true spiritual emotions (bhāvas) awakening in our hearts. Finally, they completely remove us from the material dimension as they situate us in our svarūpa (eternal, original form and personality) so that we can directly associate with the Lord.

Every thought, word, deed, or emotion that does not meet the standards given in this verse is a product of the guṇas and binds us to this world. On the other hand, if we mold our existence to ensure that it fits within the symptoms given in this verse, we will escape the influence of the guṇas, and we can accomplish this amazing feat even during the stage of sādhanā bhakti.

This fact, which should provide us with a great deal of encouragement, is pointed out by Śrīla Gurudeva in his comments on verse 14.26 in the Bhagavad Gita, where he says:

“In many places Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī has confirmed that a devotee becomes free from the modes of material natures (the guṇas) even in the stage of sādhanā. Although objects such as a leaf, flower, fruit, water, and sandalwood paste appear to be material in the eyes of non-devotees, when the devotees offer these items to Bhagavān with devotion, they attain a transcendental nature and become situated beyond the three modes. How much more is this true of the devotees who fully offer themselves? This is also confirmed in Śrī Caitanya-Caritāmṛta, Antya-Lila (4.191):

Lord Caitanya said: ‘The body of a bhakta is never material. It is considered to be transcendental (situated in the spiritual dimension) and full of spiritual bliss’”

So, as much as we have spoken about māyā’s prison house of illusions, and even though simply escaping from there is not our highest goal, still, we should be excited to become situated in the spiritual dimension, for it is only there that we can render pure, and direct, personal service to the Lord.

If this is something we truly desire, then we must study this verse and develop the symptoms of pure bhakti in our lives.

Returning now to the analysis given by Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja, let’s take a moment to think about the fact that from a simple verbal root—śil—he has drawn out such an in depth understanding of how we must endeavor to both engage and disengage ourselves in our bhakti practices using our thoughts, words, and deeds, and of course our emotions as well. And we’d also like you to be extremely aware of the fact that without the guidance of these true gurus in our line, the real meanings of these verses would never become known to us, for by realizing this truth, we will become very anxious to serve them and to accept them as our guiding light and only authority as we walk a long on the bhakti path.

As we contemplate and accept this truth, let’s move on to see how Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja further explains the symptoms of pure bhakti to us.

Continuous and Without Obstruction

After giving as a detailed analysis of the various meanings of the prefix “anu”, Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja tells us this:

“The prefix anu is used in this verse with the verb-root śil to convey “perpetually and ardently endeavoring”. In other words, the ardent endeavors (śīlanam) discussed in this definition of uttamā-bhakti must be perpetual and without obstruction. Furthermore, such perpetual ardent endeavors must be exclusively for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. When anu-śīlanam in both its features [engagement/disengagement and emotions (bhāvas)] is meant exclusively for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, then it is part of bhakti. Hence—Kṛṣṇa, anu-śīlanam.”

If you compare this quote to the definition we gave you, you will find some slight wording differences and the addition of some refining details as well, and thus we want to explain to you why we have chosen to use terms that are slightly different from those of Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja.

He uses the words “perpetual” and “ardent” to describe these endeavors. We have used the word “continuous” and the term “emotion filled” instead.

In Webster’s II New Riverside Dictionary, we find “perpetual” defined as “continuing without or almost without interruption,” and thus, by this we can see that “continuous” conveys the same meaning. However, since “perpetual” is less commonly used, we chose to use continuous because, as we study these truths, even slight misunderstandings can lead to greater ones down the line.

This truth is noted indirectly by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī when he defines intelligence as “the ability to recognize the subtle meanings of words.” With this in mind, we wanted to use a word whose meaning would most likely be clear to a larger majority of our readers.

Also, if we look up “continuous” in that same dictionary, we find that it gives a definition that very closely resembles the expanded definition of “anu” given by Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja, who uses the term “perpetual and without obstruction,” while “continuous” is defined, as “uninterrupted: unbroken.”

Baring all we have said in mind, using the English word “continuous” to represent “anu” seemed like a reasonable decision, and yet we again apologize if there was any fault in our doing so.

Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja used the “ardent” to describe these

endeavors, and this word, again using the same dictionary, is defined as “marked by warmth of emotion.” When we consider that within his explanation of the root-verb *śil*, he also brought in *bhāva* (emotions), and the fact that “ardent” is again a fairly uncommon word, using the term “emotion filled” again seemed like a reasonable way to express the same idea in a way that would be best understood by a wider audience.

And finally, we wish to address how we have clarified who is being referred to by the name “Kṛṣṇa” in this verse. We have added the descriptive words “the topmost, cowherd boy form of the Lord,” to refer to who Kṛṣṇa is.

From early on in this course, we have told you that this form alone represents the Supreme Personality of God, and yet we have not yet fully explained all of the reasons that this is true. As we continue in this course, we will present more of these truths, but for now, we’d just like to share one fact and a few quotes from Śrīla Gurudeva that will both help you understand why we have added these identifying comments and why making a clear distinction in our hearts on exactly which form of the Lord is topmost is a very critical symptom of what pure bhakti is.

The form of Kṛṣṇa that appeared on the battlefield with Arjuna and who spoke the Bhagavad-Gita to him is not the same as the cowherd boy form of the Lord. As we said, we will fully explore both the mysteries and the truths behind this statement in the future, but it is important for us to begin to make this distinction.

The relationships that cowherd boy Kṛṣṇa has with His associates are incomparably sweeter than those that exist between Kṛṣṇa, the warrior king, and His associates. But it is not for our own good, for our own pleasure, for our own desire to taste something that is sweeter than we should only focus our heart on the cowherd boy of Vṛndavāna; we have been instructed to follow this path by the Lord Himself, for the Vedas tell us this:

“The Lord’s desire to appear [as Lord Caitanya] was born from two reasons: The Lord wanted to taste the sweet essence of the mellow of love of God (prema-rasa) and He wanted to propagate the path of rāgānugā-bhakti in this world. Thus, He is known as supremely jubilant and the most merciful of all.

[Lord Kṛṣṇa thought] “All the universes are filled with knowledge of My majestic features, but prema that is weakened by awareness of My majesty does not provide Me with pleasures [that equal the pleasures I receive from My love-filled exchanges with those who are not aware of My position as the ALMIGHTY GOD.] (CC Ādi 4.16-17)

This is why we focus on the cowherd boy of Vṛndavāna. We desire to give Kṛṣṇa as much pleasure as we possibly can, therefore, when He Himself tells us that He receives less pleasure if we think of Him in His majestic form, and worship Him with awe and reverence, we should abandon that conception of Him.

These two verses also provide us with another hint as to what the symptoms of pure bhakti are, but we’re going to return to that later. Right now we’re going to share some quotes from Śrīla Gurudeva where he speaks on the importance of focusing our love on one form of the Lord.

Although these quotes were originally spoken in lectures, they have been compiled and published in a book that has been titled “Going Beyond Vaikuntha”. We mention this because this title also conveys an aspect of what pure bhakti is. This is true because it is on the Vaikuntha planets, the spiritual planets that are without (*vai*) anxiety (*kuntha*) that the Lord is worshipped in all His unlimited numbers of majestic forms. However, in these unlimited numbers of planets, He is only worshipped with the awareness of His majesty, and that form

of worship does not bring Him the greatest pleasure. Therefore, if we want to truly please Him, we must go beyond Vaikuntha, to Kṛṣṇaloka, where He roams the forest of Vṛndavāna as a cowherd boy.

In regards to selecting a specific form of the Lord, Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us this:

“In bhakti, there should be exclusive feeling for one form of the Lord. Kṛṣṇa, Rāma [the perfect husband and king], Nṛsiṃha [the half-man/half-lion], Nārāyaṇa [the majestic form]—They are all one, but for a devotee, one favorite Deity must come. Then there can be perfection in the deep moods of one’s worship (bhajana). Otherwise, the vision that all are equal and all are one from the viewpoint of tattva (spiritual truths) is correct, but from the viewpoint of worship, there are some shortcomings in it.” (Going Beyond Vaikuntha)

“If inside us there are exclusive feelings for one particular form of the Lord, then bhakti will come, but if there are not exclusive feelings toward one form, then it will not come.”

One may desire to perform worship filled with deep moods and emotions (bhajana) for Rāma and Sītā [the warrior king and perfect husband and His wife], Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Candravālī [an expansion of Rādhā] and Kṛṣṇa, and others. From the perspective of tattva, this is all right, and it is possible that one may even attain Vaikuntha. But if there are not exclusive feelings for one particular deity then there will be no spiritual transformations of the heart that cause liquid emotions and ecstasies (rasa) and no spiritual bliss (ānanda). This is being exclusive, but it is not being biased: it is thoroughly correct.”

So this is why we chose to include the description of Kṛṣṇa as the cowherd boy form of the Lord. As part of our practice of the type of pure bhakti that leads to the highest type of prema, prema for Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, we need to perform these continuous/perpetual emotion filled/ardent endeavors solely in the service of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Now, before we go on to discuss the last word used by Lord Caitanya to describe the primary symptoms of pure bhakti, we want to linger for just a moment or two on what “continuous” means, and, in order to do so, we want to share a list of synonyms that are given for this word, for as we have been told, determining the subtle meanings of words is a sign of intelligence, and, since we are also to use our intelligence as a tool to uncover our prema, let’s be sure we understand just exactly what continuous endeavors are.

Webster’s gives these synonyms for “continuous”: ceaseless, constant, endless, eternal, everlasting, incessant, nonstop, perpetual, relentless, round-the-clock, timeless, and unremitting.

If we carefully look over this list and think about what subtle meanings come to mind when we read these words we will likely find that although they are all synonyms, although they all do have similar meanings, there are shades of differences too. Well, actually, it may not be so much that there are differences, but perhaps there are additional aspects of what continuous means, and, as we will share with you, some of these shades of meaning can help us to define and understand the various ways that our endeavors must be continuous to truly qualify as pure bhakti. So, although we won’t cover them all, let’s take a look of a few of the ways continuous can be expressed.

When we said “continuous”, did the word “eternal” come to your mind? For many of us, we may think of continuous in the limited time scale of life in the material worlds, where the illusion of “death” seems to bring an end to things. But in the spiritual dimension, where all aspects of pure bhakti take place, the limiting factor of māyā’s time clock does not exist.

The endeavors of pure bhakti will be eternally

performed. The will not cease when we leave the material body behind. Therefore, they are, as another synonym tells us, truly ceaseless.

Let's look at the word "nonstop". Most of those who consider themselves to faithful followers of the many various religions in this world do not consider that they must engage in nonstop worship of the Lord. Some may feel that a major weekly worship like Sunday mass, interspaced with some smaller daily devotionals, such as prayers at mealtimes and before bed, are fully sufficient to qualify themselves as sincere followers of their faith. Others may fee a slightly more devoted type of worship, with regular worship at specific times throughout every day, along with other observances such as fasts and the giving of charity are required aspects of showing one's true faith. But in general, these devotional activities are interspaced with time devoted to other pursuits, where worship of the Lord is placed on the back burner while one focuses on entirely material pursuits.

Pure bhakti is not like this. Of course, in the sādhana stage, the weak mind and the influence of the guṇas will win a portion of their battles to draw our attention away from Kṛṣṇa, but still, **our goal will always be to actually perform nonstop service.**

The pure devotees in both the spiritual planets and those who descend to this earth are engaged in this nonstop service, and, since this is a goal we all hope to achieve, we want to discuss two of the simplest ways that we can achieve this goal.

The first is simply to practice rule #1—always remember Kṛṣṇa. Next month we're going to share a lengthy discussion on some of the ways we can do this and how it will lead us toward pure bhakti, but the general concept is expressed in a portion of one quote from the Gita, where **Lord Kṛṣṇa** tells Arjuna:

"I am the source of all creation. Everything emanates from Me." (BG 10.10)

This verse tells us that there is nothing that is not related to Kṛṣṇa. If we can somehow realize this truth then we will be able to see Him in everything that exists, and thus, by never being able to forget Him, we will engage in nonstop bhakti.

Another tool we can use to practice nonstop bhakti is the chanting of the Holy Names. Whether done aloud or in the mind, keeping at least a portion of our consciousness focused on the Holy Names is a very powerful and purifying way to practice bhakti. As we do this more and more, the Names will become deeply imbedded into our consciousness.

The mind is quite a magnificent piece of equipment. Even such simple things as riding a bike or reading a book require the mind to simultaneously take in, process, calculate, and send out billions of bits of information.

As we train the mind to chant the Holy Names, it becomes a consistent part of its programming, and eventually, with little or no conscious effort on our part, we will find ourselves repeating the mahā-mantra even as we think about and do other things on the more conscious levels of the mind. If you sincerely and honestly conduct experiments in this science, you will discover for yourself that what we are saying is true.

Early on in this course, when we first shared the mahā-mantra with you, we entitled one section "It's Got Rhythm". If you repeat this mantra over and over again you will find that it has a naturally soothing rhythm to it and that you can repeat it countless times, that is you can say it nonstop, and still never become tired of it.

Therefore, these two tools, seeing Kṛṣṇa in everything and chanting the Holy Names, are very effective ways of engaging in nonstop bhakti.

Moreover, the final two synonyms for "continuous" that we will look at are **relentless** and **unremitting**. We chose these

two, and grouped them together, because they both imply a very important subtle aspect of what is meant by the continuous practice of bhakti.

As we walk along on our journey to prema, we are sure to face various types of obstacles. When these arise in our path, **we must be relentless; we must not allow any difficulties that we have to face to cause us to stop our attempts to make daily progress toward our goal. We must be unremitting in the pursuance of prema.** So this symptom of pure bhakti, that is must be perpetually/continuously performed includes all of these aspects of this word. It must be performed nonstop, round-the-clock twenty-four hours a day. It must be carried out relentlessly and unremittingly, as we never give up simply because we have to overcome some obstacle, and ultimately, it must be carried out eternally.

The Mood Matters Too

In the next section of his explanation of the verse, which describes the symptoms of pure bhakti, Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja explains why the aspects of this verse that we have discussed so far are not enough to fully define the primary symptoms of pure bhakti.

So far, we have analyzed *Kṛṣṇānuśīlanam* as being **"continuous, emotion filled endeavors to render service to the topmost, cowherd boy form of the Lord (who is of course Kṛṣṇa Himself)."**

In describing these endeavors, Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja tells us:

"It stands to reason that such perpetual ardent endeavors would surely be immediately pleasing to the person they were meant for. Thus it would seem we have discovered the definition of bhakti in the term Kṛṣṇānuśīlanam itself."

Nevertheless, upon an examination of all the subtle aspects of this definition, he tells us that it is not complete in and of itself because it contains two faults. He says:

"In some respects it extends to include too much and in other respects, it does not extend far enough."

In explaining what this over and under extension means, Śrīla Gurudeva tells us:

"Over extension means that the definition is too wide, and thus it encompasses things which are not included in the definition. Under extension means that the definition is too narrow, and thus it excludes things that should be included in the definition." (Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu)

In explaining how the description that has so far been given is both too wide and too narrow, our ācāryas have relied on two incidents from the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa when He was on this planet some 5000 years ago.

Before we share these examples, let's again state the portion of the definition we are examining as it now stands.

The symptoms of pure bhakti, the performance of which leads to prema, are continuous emotion filled endeavors to render service to the topmost, cowherd boy form of the Lord, in order to bring pleasure to Him.

This definition is explained as being too wide by using the example of an event that took place when Kṛṣṇa, who was still a young boy, engaged in a wrestling match with powerful, fully-grown men.

These men had been selected by an evil king, and the entire purpose of the match was to have Kṛṣṇa killed.

One may first think the activities of these demonic beings would not fit into the definition above because their attacks on Kṛṣṇa could not possibly be pleasing to Him, but this logic is refuted by a verse from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* which tells us, **"Although in the vision of ordinary persons a fierce battle with an enemy is the cause of great distress, for great heroes it is very pleasing." (1.13.30)**

Based on this truth, it would seem that the violent attacks of

the demonic wrestlers could fall within the symptoms of pure bhakti because, even though Kṛṣṇa was still a child, He easily defeated the wrestlers and the joy of heroism surged within Him, thus bringing Him pleasure. However, since their endeavors were motivated by a desire to harm Kṛṣṇa, there is no possibility that they can be included as bhakti. Therefore, the definition as it now stands is too wide for it could be seen to include these acts.

On the other hand, if acts of bhakti must be pleasing to Kṛṣṇa, then someone who causes Him a displeasure would not be considered a devotee and the endeavors that displeased Him would not be considered bhakti. Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja explains the example that shows the fault of under extension of the definition given so far.

“Once when Mother Yaśodā (Kṛṣṇa’s mother) was breast feeding baby Kṛṣṇa, the milk she had been heating began to boil over. At once, she removed Śrī Kṛṣṇa from her lap, much to His displeasure, and ran to save the milk. Kṛṣṇa was so enraged that, biting His lips, He smashed a nearby clay pot that was full of yogurt. He was so intensely unhappy at being denied His mother’s breast milk to His full satisfaction that He burst into tears.

When Mother Yaśodā denied Śrī Kṛṣṇa full satisfaction, He was not even slightly pleased with Her. Hence, in this case, defining bhakti as Kṛṣṇānuśīlanam alone prevents the definition from extending to include these actions. In other words, the fault of being too narrow has arisen.

Mother Yaśodā is the presiding goddess of immaculate prema-bhakti in the mood of parental love of God. Her every endeavor is for the sake of serving Kṛṣṇa. In this pastime, she had thought to herself, “My breast milk alone will not fully nurture Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but the milk on the stove, which is now boiling over, will protect His life!” Although Mother Yaśodā was the queen of Vraja (the village of cow herders) and always surrounded by unlimited servants and maids, she would personally milk the best cows and heat their excellent milk. Then, with her own hands, she would prepare the finest butter for Kṛṣṇa.

“Even if I displease Kṛṣṇa for the time being,” she had thought, “I must save this milk for Him.” Thoughts like this would cause her prema-bhakti to swell to exceptional heights and thereafter permeate all of her actions. Her actions can never be anything but bhakti.”

So here, by including the idea that actions must be pleasing to Kṛṣṇa within the symptoms of pure bhakti, the definition becomes too narrow.

To correct these two faults, the word “ānukūlyena” has been added. Our ācāryas have defined this word as meaning both “out of genuine kindness” and “completely free from any attitude that is unfavorable or hostile to Kṛṣṇa.”

In explaining how the inclusion of this word has now made the definition of the primary symptoms of pure bhakti now complete, Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja both explains the importance of this word and hints at the reason why the secondary symptoms, what bhakti is not, are also included. He teaches us:

“If someone aspires to perform perpetual ardent endeavors meant exclusively for Śrī Kṛṣṇa then he must first become ānukūla—genuinely kind to Him, and he must completely expel even the slightest trace of hostility from his heart. Even if someone’s endeavors temporarily seem to be entirely favorable to Kṛṣṇa, if they are not utterly devoid of any underlying adversity and any craving for personal gratification, then it is not bhakti. Although his endeavors may momentarily please his worshipful Lord, if they harbor

any personal, selfish, ulterior motives, or any motivation besides pleasing the Lord, he will fail to receive the actual fruit of bhakti, namely superlative love of God (prema). Instead the result he obtains will simply correspond to his underlying intentions.”

Here we find the instruction that we have shared with you repeatedly in recent lessons. **The results of our actions are dependent upon our motives**, and this is very much the driving truth behind the secondary symptoms of pure bhakti, as we shall soon see. But before we move on let’s finish up our discussion on the primary symptoms of pure bhakti, and allow us to share an expanded, and thus more complete and accurate definition of these symptoms with you.

First, we’ll sum up how the addition of the adjective ānukūlyena (favorable/genuinely kind/free from hostility) has now eliminated the over and under extension regarding the endeavors to serve Kṛṣṇa.

Continuous emotion filled endeavors to render service to Kṛṣṇa do not qualify as bhakti unless they are entirely free from hostility towards Him; and on the other hand, even if these endeavors displease Him, if they are devoid of hostility, they may rightfully be called bhakti. Therefore, while all acts that please Kṛṣṇa (such as the attacks of the wrestlers) may not be bhakti, those acts that are done in order to serve Him (such as His mother’s tending to the overheated milk) are bhakti as long as there is no hostility whatsoever toward Him.⁸

There is one final consideration as to why both of these words, ānukūlyena and Kṛṣṇānuśīlanam, were needed, and that is this. The simple fact that service performed to Kṛṣṇa is devoid of hostility cannot, in and of itself, define bhakti. This is because objects such as pots, which are also used in Kṛṣṇa’s service, feel no hostility toward Him. Yet likewise, they can also not make any active endeavors to serve Him, nor can they express any emotions toward Him, therefore, the two terms together are needed to express the symptoms of pure bhakti.

Having shared these truths with you, we will now give you a more complete definition of the primary symptoms of pure bhakti.

Pure bhakti takes place through the performance of continuous, emotion-filled endeavors, which are motivated entirely by a desire to exclusively serve Kṛṣṇa in His top most form, which is that of a cowherd boy. These endeavors must also be performed out of genuine kindness toward Him, while one is entirely devoid of any hostile feelings toward Him. When one’s endeavors meet all of these qualifications, they are known to be in the category of first class bhakti that is completely beyond the influence of the guṇas.

The Secondary Symptoms—What Pure Bhakti Is Not

Although we have used the term “secondary symptoms” in describing the description of those things that are not a part of pure bhakti, Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja uses a slightly different term—boundary symptoms, and thus we want to share why this term is used by him.

In his explanation of pure bhakti, he shares the following quote:

That which remains distinct from an object while causing a better understanding of it to arise is called the objects boundary symptom.

So the next terms we will explain are distinct from/not in any way a part of pure bhakti, and yet, by understanding them (what pure bhakti is not), we will also be able to better understand what pure bhakti is.

Devoid of All Selfish Desires and Ulterior Motives

When we perform bhakti (service to Kṛṣṇa), what is it that we should be desiring to receive in return? The answer is

bhakti, more opportunities to serve Him. This aspect of pure bhakti is expressed by the word **“anyābhilāṣitā.”**

This Sanskrit word is actually composed of a root word, along with a prefix and two suffixes, all of which are needed to fully express this boundary symptom of pure bhakti.

The root word **“abhiṣā”** refers to selfish desires. The prefix **“anya”** means **“without”**. And the two suffixes **“in”** and **“tā”** have been combined as **“itā”** to indicate **the condition of being in one’s normal state of mind.**

The suffixes form an important part of this definition because, **at times, when one’s state of mind is disrupted by something such as fear, even a pure devotee may have a desire that appears to be selfish.**

For example, when Kṛṣṇa was here 5000 years ago, His father, who, like His mother, was totally pure and completely incapable of harboring a selfish desire, was attached by a snake, and disrupted by fear, Kṛṣṇa’s father called out to Kṛṣṇa, asking to be saved. In a condition such as this, where one has a desire that is motivated by fear, his devotional status is not affected.

This combined suffix is also used to indicate that desires which are not motivated by calamity, but which still seem selfish, may also not fall outside of the definition of pure bhakti. The example given by Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja is that of Arjuna’s eldest brother who desired to become emperor of the world in order to be able to serve Kṛṣṇa better. To accomplish this, he requested Kṛṣṇa’s permission to perform a ceremony that would establish him as the emperor. Although it might seem that such a request was motivated by a desire to achieve personal gains, there was no such consideration on his part. Therefore, his status as a pure devotee was not affected in any way.

With these facts established, we can add to our definition of pure bhakti by saying that **while in one’s normal state of mind one must be completely free of selfish desires and ulterior motives.**

While on this subject, we would like to take a moment to specifically address one of the most subtle and dangerous forms of selfish desires and ulterior motives—the desire to be honored or to become famous.

When we discussed the obstacles on the path of bhakti (the anāṛthas), we mentioned the fact that the performance of bhakti itself can lead to obstacles because as we become purified we begin to develop some of Kṛṣṇa’s qualities as well, one of which is that other’s become attracted to us. When we find others seeking our association and giving us respect, it is very easy to become affected by this and to allow the false ego to create an image for ourselves that we are someone special that is worthy of honor and fame, when in truth, everything we can ever achieve due to our bhakti practices manifests due to the mercy of Śrī guru and Kṛṣṇa. We are never, in any way responsible for, or deserving of any honor or fame. This is why our ācāryas, who are pure devotees that should be praised, still remain humble and set the proper example for us by always giving credit for their position and accomplishments to their gurus.

The desire for fame and honor has been discussed by our ācāryas in very colorful and descriptive ways. They have told us that even when all other obstacles have been removed from our path, this anāṛtha may still be difficult to remove, so in honor of their desire to instruct us in these truths, we will share a few quotes with you.

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī (16) a personal associate of Lord Caitanya has described this obstacle in this way:

“O mind! How can pure love (prema) appear in my heart while the shameless dog-eating outcaste woman of the desire

for fame and honor is proudly dancing there? Therefore, O mind, I request you to always remember and serve the immeasurably powerful commanders of the army of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the beloved devotees of the Lord. They will at once banish this outcaste woman and cause the immaculate type of prema possessed by the direct associates of the cowherd boy Kṛṣṇa to begin to flow in my heart.” (Śrī Manah-śikṣā verse 7)

In commenting on this verse, Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us:

“The obstacle being spoken of here is the desire for honor and distinction. Although all other anāṛthas may be dispelled, this desire is not easily removed. From this desire, all kinds of deceit and hypocrisy arise and are gradually nourished. The desire for honor and distinction is called shameless because, even though it is the root of other obstacles, it fails to recognize its own fault. It is also called a female dog-eater because it is engaged in eating the dog-meat of fame.

Śrīla Gurudeva then explains how this desire manifests in different types of devotees and finishes his comments on the desire for fame and honor by saying:

“As long as the desire for honor and distinction has not been driven from the heart, deceit will remain; and until one becomes free from deceit, he cannot attain pure, unalloyed prema.”

By this statement, we can see how important it is to remove this obstacle, for it alone can prevent us from attaining our goal. And, since we’ve made such an effort to paint this truth out to you let’s also spend a moment looking at how we can best eliminate this desire from our heart.

In the original verse, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī told us to **“always remember and serve the immeasurably powerful commanders of the army of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the beloved devotees of the Lord.”**

In discussing why this is the proper way to clear the desire for fame and honor from our hearts, Śrīla Gurudeva tells us:

“The mercy of the powerful generals of Kṛṣṇa’s army is unparalleled. From their hearts, the potency to destroy this obstacle is transmitted into the heart of the faithful practitioners, thus dispelling wickedness, deceit, and hypocrisy and manifesting the highest type of pure prema, that of the Lord’s associates in Vṛndavāna...Therefore in the Padma Purāṇa, worship of the Vaiṣṇavas is declared to be even higher than the worship of the Supreme Lord.”

Lord Siva said, ‘The worship of the Lord is the Highest of all different types of worship. But even superior to that is the worship of His devotees.’

“By serving the lotus feet of the devotees of Bhagavān, highly concentrated pure prema develops for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and as a result, one also obtains everlasting deliverance from the bondage of material existence... Serving them eradicates all anāṛthas and very easily generates the rare and divine Kṛṣṇa-prema”

We pray these powerful truths enter your heart.

Returning now to our discussion on the symptoms of pure bhakti, we reminded you that above truths about the desire for fame and honor because one of these symptoms was that we must be devoid of all selfish desires and ulterior motives, which of course includes all desires to satisfy the senses (kāma), and ultimately, it means that the only reward we should ever seek to attain is the opportunity to always remember and serve the cowherd boy of Vṛndavāna.

Not Eclipsed By (Anāvrtam)

In the above section, we discussed being devoid of selfish desires. The Sanskrit word that was used to describe that symptom of pure bhakti (śūnyam) means totally devoid of, absolutely free from, in other words, zero personal desires must remain.

In the next set of symptoms listed, a different word is used to describe how we are to deal with karma, jñāna, and other so-called religious practices. This word (anāvṛtam) has been translated as “not eclipsed by”, which basically means that while pure bhakti can and in fact does include certain aspects of action, knowledge, and, at times, these other paths, we cannot allow our contact with them to cover over or become more important in our lives than our bhakti-yoga practices. So let’s look at each of these individually in order to develop an understanding of how we are to properly accomplish this goal.

Not Eclipsed by Karma

Karma means “action.” Every deed we do can therefore properly be classified under this basic meaning. As we have discussed in the past, and as we will look at next month, when we engage our actions in the Lord’s service, we can transfer them from the material to the spiritual dimension, but still as **Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja** tells us:

“Karma is present within bhakti as serving the Supreme Lord by cleaning His temple, cooking food for Him and so on. Factually, these activities are included within the nine limbs of bhakti; they are not mundane karma. Had the words “devoid of” been used, all karma, even those actions that serve the Lord would have been excluded from the symptoms of pure bhakti, even though these actions do not eclipse bhakti. Therefore, they are not excluded because, in truth, their purpose is solely to nurture bhakti and they are in fact an indispensable part of it.”

By this explanation, we can see why the subtle meanings of words can be so important and we can also begin to appreciate the fact that these details of the science of bhakti-yoga have been so mercifully recorded by our ācāryas and presented to us.

In translating a work by **Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Śrīla Gurudeva** explains how even actions that are not directly a part of bhakti can also be performed without them eclipsing pure bhakti practices.

Within the Vedas, we can find a variety of instructions on performing practices that are not directly related to bhakti. This includes such things as making offerings to one’s forefathers. When a person is performing pure bhakti, he is no longer required to perform such activities because he understands that by engaging himself fully in the service of the Lord all his responsibilities in life are met.

If someone fails to understand this, and thus he performs these other acts, even if they impede on his bhakti practices, then such actions have eclipsed his bhakti.

Another example of how karma eclipses bhakti occurs when one feels that the performance of these other actions will give the same result as bhakti, and thus he faithfully performs them, thinking that he must do so in order to receive the results of his bhakti practices, then those actions also eclipse his bhakti.

However, if performed with proper understanding these other actions, that are not directly a part of bhakti can still be performed.

Śrīla Gurudeva describes this as follows:

“If an advanced devotee sometimes performs Vedic rituals like the making of offerings to the forefathers, with no regard for them and merely for the instruction of the people in general, will no harm be done to his bhakti? Because he performs such activities without the faith that bhakti is dependent on such performances, there is no hindrance to or covering of his pure bhakti.”

Another type of karma that needs to be considered are those actions that are generally required in order for us to maintain our body, such as gathering and eating food.

In the very advanced stages of bhakti, a devotee will simply do these out of habit, without even the slightest intentional

effort on his part, while still keeping all of his thoughts engaged solely in his bhakti practices.

In fact, some devotees who are fully liberated (situated in mukti), are fully disassociated with the material body. Being situated in their svarūpa, they can survive on amounts of food that would not maintain the life of a person in a lesser state. For example, **Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī** survived on just a teaspoon of ghee (clarified butter) a day.

For the rest of us, these activities must still be carried out. In next month’s lesson, we will discuss in detail how this can be done in a way that supports our bhakti, but for now, we will just say that such karma must be carried out in a detached mood and with a full understanding that everything belongs to the Lord and is meant to please Him. As long as we do not prepare food, eat it, or perform other activities related to the body motivated by a desire to please ourselves, such karma will not eclipse our bhakti practices.

In summary, actions (karma) that are directly a part of bhakti (i.e. cleaning the temple) do not eclipse bhakti, in fact, they nourish it. The performance of actions that are not directly a part of bhakti (i.e. maintaining the body and making offerings to the forefathers) do not eclipse bhakti unless one performs them out of fear that he will commit sins for failing to do so, or unless he feels that his progress in bhakti is dependent on his performing these other acts, or that his bhakti is benefitted by them.

Not Eclipsed by Jñāna

In last month’s lesson, we discussed three types of knowledge:

- 1) Knowledge of the Supreme Lord;
- 2) Knowledge of the jīvas and their relationship to the Lord;
- 3) Knowledge that establishes the equality of the jīva with the impersonal aspect of the Lord (Brahmā). All knowledge from this third category is to be rejected as it is entirely false, is opposed to bhakti, and must be given up.

Knowledge from the first two categories are not opposed to bhakti, and therefore they can generally be accepted. In fact, in the early stages of our bhakti practices they are considered to be essential. However, as we move closer and closer toward our goal, and as we begin to develop attachments for a specific form of the Lord, there are aspects of the first two types of knowledge that will need to be narrowed down from their general understandings in order to conform to the specific relationship that we have with **Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa**.

This is to broad a subject to fully explore here, and we will be doing so in later lessons, but we will briefly mention an aspect of this that we have touched on, both in previous lessons and earlier in this lesson as well.

As we progress on our journey to prema, at some point, knowledge of our eternal, original, and personally specific spiritual form and personality (our svarūpa) will be revealed to us. As this begins to take place, if our attraction is clearly directed toward the Lord’s sweetest form as the cowherd boy of Vṛndavāna, then knowledge of the Lord’s opulence and majesty, an awareness of Him as “THE ALMIGHTY GOD!” will actually become an obstacle in our development of prema toward his sweetest form.

*“If one is overcome by knowledge of the Lord’s opulence, he cannot attain the direct service of **Śrī Kṛṣṇa** in Vṛndavāna, even though he is engaged in worshipping Him as the Supreme Lord.” (C.C. Madhya 8.230)*

Of course, as we mentioned, in the early stages of our progress this knowledge is important. This is because; **as we first begin to learn about some of the activities that Kṛṣṇa performs, we must always be aware of the fact that HE IS GOD.** If we fail to keep this fact in mind, we may feel we can judge His activities as being like those conducted by us, and

thus we may try to find fault with some of the things He does. If we know He is **GOD**, then we know He is perfect and completely incapable of faults or misbehavior, and this understanding will protect us from misjudging Him. But later, as we advance, and we ourselves become incapable of such errors in our view of Him, the necessity of thinking of Him as **GOD** fades slowly away.

Another type of knowledge that can eclipse our bhakti is that which is gathered solely from the senses (empiric) and that which is speculative (created by our brain or the brain of another). As we have discussed, if such knowledge supports and nourishes our bhakti, it may be carefully accepted, but if it in any way creates doubts, it eclipses our bhakti and must be immediately rejected.

There is one final aspect of how knowledge can be an obstacle for us, even when it comes to proper knowledge of the Lord, the jīvas, and their relationship with them. Although this knowledge is important, there is a point where our insistence on collecting it can become a burden, as is discussed in this quote from **Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja**.

“It is a very difficult thing to cross the charm of knowledge. We think, ‘I want to understand everything first, and then I will act.’ Calculation and underlying suspicion is there. Before we act, we want to know everything fully; only then will we risk our capital. The ego, the “I” is very strong, and he wants to have an account of his loss and gain. He thinks, ‘I am the master. The key is in my hand. I want to test everything; I want to know it all. Only I know what is good for me.’ So we think ourselves masters, not servants, and from the position of a master, we make our inquiry.

“But this calculating mentality must be given up if we at all want to enter the domain of the Lord, where everything is superior to us...”

We are not to exercise our brain so much there. The brain has no room there; the residents there are all brainer than we are. Our brain is unnecessary there; only our hands are necessary. Menial labor is necessary there... So, we are to hatefully dismiss our brains, and taking only our hearts, we must approach and enter that land.” (The Search for Kṛṣṇa—Reality the Beautiful)

These considerations of how knowledge can become an obstacle on our path should be studied and meditated upon, and, with the mercy of Śrī guru, we should try to bring them into our hearts.

Eclipsed By Other So Called Religious Practices (Ādī)

In the portion of the verse that we are examining, where the boundary (what pure bhakti is not) symptoms are described, we find the word “**ādī**” which literally means “**and so on.**” In telling us what is meant by the word, **Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja** says:

“Ādī refers to futile forms of renunciation, mystic yoga (aṣṭāṅga-yoga/the eightfold path), the type of yoga where one repeatedly meditates on the formless aspect of the Lord (abhyāsa-yoga), and so forth.”

In considering these types of practices, we should remain aware of what we mentioned in Lesson 16, where we discussed using certain aspects of those practices, such as the āśanas (postures) of aṣṭāṅga-yoga within our bhakti practices. There we showed how Śrīla Prabhupāda said these practices could be used as they can help us stay healthy and aide our bhakti, while also telling us that they “**are not necessary.**”

Just as with our mentioning of empiric and speculative knowledge above, the cutoff point is reached when any other process disrupts or begins to take precedence over our bhakti practices.

The Symptoms of Pure Bhakti

Having now gone into quite a bit of detail about all of the

various symptoms of pure bhakti, we’re going to close this discussion with an expanded version of the earlier definition we shared. Our hope is, that by the time you are done studying this lesson, you will be able to read this longer definition and draw from it all of the deeper meanings and details we have passed on to you, and then, over time, you will be able to do this simply by reading the simple, short, original version we shared. And perhaps, for those of you who are extremely dedicated and very serious, you will even be able to do this based upon the original Sanskrit version as well.

So please allow us to share this definition of the symptoms of pure bhakti with you.

The topmost form of love-drenched service (uttamā-bhakti) consists of continuous, emotion filled endeavors, which are solely motivated by a desire to fully and exclusively engage one’s mind, body, and words in the service of the cowherd boy of Vṛndavāna, Śrī Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇānuśīlanam).

These endeavors must be done out of genuine kindness while also being completely devoid of any hostile or unfavorable mood toward Kṛṣṇa (ānukūlyena).

These endeavors must also be uneclipsed by all other so called spiritual practices (ādī) which are not performed solely in the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; unless such activities are performed as a part of or in support of one’s bhakti practices or for the instruction of the general population. In addition, these ancillary activities, must not be performed with any belief that one’s advancement in bhakti is dependent upon them, that one’s bhakti will be enhanced by them, or hindered if one fails to perform them.

These endeavors must not be eclipsed by (anāvṛtam) any other activities (karma), such as those one must perform to maintain his life, nor may they be even slightly mixed with activities designed to gain personal rewards, nor with activities that hinder one’s bhakti. This includes avoiding all thoughts, words and deeds that are offensive and all activities that lead to these offenses.

Nor may one’s knowledge (jñāna) be even slightly tainted with that which attempts to establish positions of equality or oneness between the jīvas and the Supreme Lord (for such concepts seek to eliminate the permanent and eternal differences between these separate and distinct individuals, while also trying to establish the Lord as formless and without attributes, thus denying the ever-existing reality of the unique and various forms and qualities of the Lord).

This knowledge must also not eclipse one’s appreciation for the Lord’s sweetest form as the cowherd boy of Vṛndavāna by placing too much emphasis on His majestic position as the almighty God, nor may it contain any speculative or empiric knowledge that in any way conflicts with the established evidence of the Vedas.

Additionally, while in one’s normal state of mind, one must be completely devoid of all selfish desires and ulterior motives (anyābhilāṣitā). In other words, one’s only desire must be to engage oneself in the service of Kṛṣṇa, and the only reward one must hope to receive is the opportunity to continue to remember Kṛṣṇa and engage in His service.

If one’s endeavors, knowledge, motives, and desires meet all of these qualifications then they will be entirely above (ut) the influence of the guṇas (tama) and they will constitute the symptoms of pure bhakti.

After this lengthy explanation of the symptoms of pure bhakti, it may seem as if this subject has been fully explained, but it has not. Next month, we will continue to look at pure bhakti and its symptoms and we will also discuss how those actions that are not directly a part of our bhakti practices can

be performed in a way that will support our bhakti.

Before we do a very short review, we want to again share the quote from Śrīla Gurudeva that we opened this discussion on pure bhakti with.

“It is the duty of a person desiring bhakti to remember this verse [that describes its symptoms] and to repeat it daily. He should try to enter deeply into its meaning and practice its understanding.”

We commit serious offenses when we disregard the instructions of our ācāryas, so even though this lesson is long and full of details, we humbly request you to follow these instructions of Śrīla Gurudeva.

Review and Closing

Well dear friends, it is time for us to say good-bye again. We have given you a lot to study this month and explained a lot of important truths, so hopefully you will be able to stay connected to these lessons and your other bhakti practices until we meet again.

We started out this lesson by sharing a brief history on the speaking of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, and in doing so; we introduced you to the two personalities that we sat with as we listened to their discussion on the history of Ajāmila.

His life story has been passed on to us because it is filled with truths about the glories of the Holy Names. If we are very fortunate, through the mercy of Śrī guru, these truths will enter our hearts and allow us to develop complete an unflinching faith in chanting the Holy Names.

As you study the story of Ajāmila, be sure to take special note of verse 6.3.22 as we will be discussing that verse again soon, when we take a detailed look at dharma.

We spent the entire second half of the lesson explaining a verse spoken by Lord Caitanya where He teaches us about the symptoms of the type of pure bhakti that leads to prema.

Within that discussion, we shared many other truths as well, such as the fact that a desire to be honored is one of the most difficult, and also one of the most dangerous obstacles in our path. In doing so however, we were also able to share the process that we can use to overcome this anārtas well. So hopefully, we will all be able to follow this advice and vanquish this desire from our heart.

We are so glad to be able to share Śrīla Gurudeva’s mercy with you and we look forward to our next walk together as we all do our best to make progress on our journey to prema.

May you develop an understanding of pure bhakti.

**We are, the servants of God’s servants,
The IPBYS Prison Outreach Program
Service team.**

All Glories to Śrīla Gurudeva!

Glossary of Personalities

Mahārāja Parikṣit—The grandson of Kṛṣṇa’s friend Arjuna. The king of the world at the beginning of the degraded age of kali-yuga. After being cursed to die, he gave up his kingdom and sat by a holy river for seven days as he heard the recitation of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī—The son of Śrīla Vyāsadeva. As a lifelong celibate and a pure and perfect sādhu, he was selected over many other sages to answer King Parikṣit’s questions, and thus he spoke the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam to him.

Viṣṇudūtas—Messengers of Lord Viṣṇu. They appeared on the scene when Ajāmila spoke the Holy Names in order to ensure that he was not punished for his sins.

Vyāsadeva—Empowered by the Lord, he wrote down the Vedas at the beginning of Kali-yuga so that these truths would be available to the fallen souls in this age.

Yamadūtas—The messengers of Yamarāja. They bring souls

before Yamarāja and also work on his behalf to carry out the punishments that he prescribes.

Yamarāja—The person responsible for the judgement and punishment of sinners upon their departure from material bodies.

Yaśodā—The mother of Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boy of Vṛndavāna.

Glossary of Terms

Brāhmaṇas—Members of the social class of priests and intellectuals. They teach society and provide advice and guidance, and they conduct religious duties as well. They are compared to the head of society.

Kṣatriyas—Members of the social class of warriors and administrators who govern society and protect it. They are compared to the arms of society.

Śudras—Members of the social class of laborers who work for the other classes. Also includes entertainers. They are compared to the legs of society.

Vaiśyas—Members of the social class of merchants and farmers. They provide society with the goods and services needed for stability and nutrition. They are compared to the stomach of society.



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Mother Yaśodā does not consider Kṛṣṇa to be God. She only thinks of Him as her beloved son, and thus she nourishes and protects Him as if He were utterly helpless.

This is an example of the type of loving mood possessed by all of the residents of Vṛndavāna, and it is these types of moods that are sought after by those who follow the path of rāgānugā bhakti.

Lesson 19 Correspondence Course

1. Name the final link in the chains of doing one's duties for material rewards, the chain of jñāna, and the chain of bhakti.
2. How did Mahārāja Parikṣit react to the curse put upon him and why did he choose this course of action?
3. In what ways can we mirror the decision made by Mahārāja Parikṣit?
4. What does it mean to "atone" for a deed?
5. What concern did Mahārāja Parikṣit express regarding the process of atonement?
6. What response did he receive to his concern?
7. If one dedicates his life to serving a pure devotee, what else must he do to overcome reactions to his sins?
8. What does Śrīla Prabhupāda describe as "the secret of success?"
9. Is the story of ajāmila a true story? How can we be sure?
10. What was at the root of the sins of ajāmila?
11. What was the great fortune ajāmila received by calling out his son's name and why did he receive this blessing?
12. Who first arrived to snatch ajāmila's soul and what was their intent?
13. Describe the difference in the appearances of the order carriers of Yamarāja and those of Lord Viṣṇu.
14. What was the basic description of dharma and adharmā given by the?
15. Who witnesses our activities?
16. Who is a candidate for after-life punishment?
17. What can we use as a basis to get an idea of the activities of one's past and future lives?
18. What ability did Yamarāja have that gave him the ability to act as a fair judge?
19. What aspect of the subtle body causes us to Transmigrate from one body to another?
20. Discuss the analogy of the silk worm.
21. Why did eating food cooked by the prostitute affect Ajāmila?
22. What are the qualifications of a king or government official?
23. Why was Ajāmila not subject to punishment?
24. What is the best means of atonement and why?
25. Does our awareness of the powers of the Holy Names affect Their potency? Give an example.
26. How should we feel about our past sins?
27. Is saving ourselves the highest goal of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness?
28. Why were the ymds confused? How did ymj Relieve their confusion?
29. What is the topmost dharma for humans? What is The most auspicious activity in the universe?
30. Describe your feelings about waking up with no desires to satisfy your own senses. How would you feel? What would you do?
31. Discuss how our emotions relate to the three stages of bhakti.
32. What are the meanings of the verb root "sil?"
33. Define the prefix "anu."
34. Why must we focus on one form of the Lord? which form are we to focus on?
35. Name two ways we can engage in nonstop bhakti?
36. Discuss how over extension and under extension

- apply to the symptoms of pure bhakti.
37. In short form, define what pure bhakti is not.
 38. Why is it important to know the symptoms of pure bhakti?
 39. For you, what is the most valuable teaching in this Lesson? Why did you choose this truth?

We highly encourage you to use these questions in your studies. If you wish to formally participate in the correspondence course you may mail your answers to our Alachua, Florida team.