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THE JOURNEY TO PREMA

~ A Course in the Science of Bhakti-Yoga ~

Lesson 20

Please Chant:

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

IN THIS LESSON:

- Get What You Need + Ahaitukī Bhakti
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- Śrī Rādhā—The Energy of Prema
- Bhakti—The Topmost Goal and Four Lesser Goals
- Angles of Vision + Do Your Duty, Think of Me
- In the Beginning...Lord Kṛṣṇa Instructs Brahmā

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His Divine Grace

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja
(Affectionately called Śrīla Gurudeva)



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THE JOURNEY TO PREMA – LESSON 20

Please accept our sincere respects as we bow down to humbly offer them to you. All glories to Śrīla Gurudeva!

Thank you for joining us again on our journey to prema. In thanking you, we wish to let you know how much we welcome and appreciate your association as we all try to engage the body, the mind, the words we speak, and our hearts in following the bhakti path. We also wish to thank you for allowing us to share these teachings with you, for this gives us an opportunity to follow the instructions of both Śrīla Gurudeva and all of the other ācāryas in our line who have taught us the importance of spreading Lord Caitanya's message in this world. We are glad to have you with us and we thank you for being a part of our Prison Outreach Program.

We spent a good bit of time in last month's lesson talking about what pure (śuddha) bhakti is, and we're going to start this lesson off with a continuation on that subject as well. Since Śrīla Gurudeva has told us that we must try to understand the various types of bhakti, which of course includes the topmost level as well, we don't hesitate to further explore this vast subject with you. In fact, when we share the first quote that we'll rely on in this lesson, we feel sure you'll agree that our studies of pure bhakti are more than worth all of the efforts we put into them.

As we wrap up that discussion (at least for now ☺) we're going to visit a topic that we've really only touched on and hinted at in this course—Śrīmatī Rādhikā. In this lesson, we'll look at how She is the reservoir from which all pure bhakti flows.

After that we'll look at another truth that is revealed in the first quote we'll share, which will bring us back to another recent subject, the goal of life.

Our next scheduled stop on this month's journey will be designed to help us understand how we can tailor our thoughts and activities in ways that fit them into a framework of consciousness that will ensure our steady progress toward pure bhakti. This will be a critical discussion, and one that we will ask you to pay special attention to, for the simple fact is that most of us are not yet ready to practice pure bhakti, and yet, by carefully controlling our thoughts and activities we can prepare ourselves for entrance into that purely spiritual realm.

And of course, as usual, we'll mix in some other important truths along the way.

Of course all of this knowledge will be a little value if we don't take up the practice of bhakti-yoga, which begins with the worship of Śrī guru.

In the Vedas, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself tells us:

One who worships Śrī guru first and then worships Me, attains all spiritual perfections. It is fruitless to worship Me alone. (Hari-bhakti vilāsa 4.344)

So before we set out on this month's journey, let's take a few minutes to seek the mercy and guidance of Śrīla Gurudeva. Let's fall flat at his feet and offer him our deepest thanks for having inspired those who work in the Prison Outreach Program to continue serving him, and let's ask him to clear the obstacles on our path, so that we may all take at least one more step on our journey to prema.

Pure Bhakti By Any Other Name

When we discussed pure bhakti in last month's lesson, we used the word "śuddha" for pure. In the longer verse that we gave you the Sanskrit for, this type of bhakti is called "uttamā", which is translated as both "topmost" and "beyond the influence of the gunas". In Chapter 9 of the Bhagavad-gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa uses the term "ananya" to describe pure bhakti, and this term is translated as "without another" or "one-pointed" which also goes by the name of "kevala".

By these examples, we can see that although pure bhakti has been described in various ways, they all are meant to refer to the highest forms of bhakti, and in this light we can also introduce you to another term, "para-bhakti", which directly translates as

the highest bhakti.

We've shared these various names with you so that you will be able to recognize them should you find them in other literature on bhakti and because we're now going to tell you about another term that Lord Caitanya has used to describe śuddha-bhakti. This term can be considered special in its own way as well, because, in the verse that we will share with you, Lord Caitanya has pin-pointed this type of bhakti as being not only the path we are to walk upon, but in many ways, the goal of our journey as well.

**If You Know What You Want—
You Can Get What You Need**

When Lord Caitanya was here, He personally composed only eight verses. In past lessons, we've shared parts of His words with you, and, in a moment, we're going to pass on another of His teachings to you. As these truths come from the highest source and authority, we should try to realize that there is absolutely no room for any doubt or discussion about their value or importance. By having condensed His message into such a short format, He has indicated to us that both the path (abhideya) and the goal (prayojana) of our practices can be found therein, and thus, is using this formula. He has also shown us that big things can come in small packages.

Of course the intricate nature of the Sanskrit language has also assisted Him in concisely stating such vast truths, for as we shall see, a single word can convey an extremely large amount of information.

Lord Caitanya teaches us this:

O Lord of the universe, I do not desire wealth; nor followers such as a spouse, children, friends, or relatives; nor do I desire material knowledge, even if it is expressed in the most poetic ways. My only desire O Lord, is that I may have pure devotion to You in birth after birth. (Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka, verse 4)

As we explore the depths of this statement, we will first look at the things we should not desire, then we will look at the Sanskrit word that we have translated as "pure". That will lead us to our discussion on Śrī Rādhā, and then we'll examine how the Lord's "birth after birth" request relates to the goal of life.

When we shared the verse that tells us the symptoms of pure bhakti in last month's lesson, the first line of that verse:

anyābhilāṣitā śūnyaṁ jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam

told us that pure bhakti must be free from all material desires that are not **directly related to our endeavors to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa**. This same idea is expressed again by Lord Caitanya in the first part of the verse we are looking at in this lesson. Abandoning our desire for wealth, material knowledge, and even the association of others who do not support, encourage, and enable us to follow the bhakti path are all requirements that are repeated over and over again throughout the Vedas.

Of course, when we apply the concept of proper detachment (yukta-vairagya), we can understand that all of these things can be accepted and utilized in our service, but that in doing so, we must always maintain the proper motives in dealing with them. Later in this lesson, we will explore this truth in great detail.

The next aspect of Lord Caitanya's verse that we are going to look at is the Sanskrit word that we have translated as "pure". This word is **ahaitukī**. In the books translated by our ācāryas, we find this word has also been translated to mean things like **"unalloyed; unmotivated; and unadulterated"**.

The term "unalloyed" refers to the fact that pure bhakti is never mixed with other activities or desires, and the term "unadulterated" carries the same meaning. The term "unmotivated" refers to material motivations, and it is in looking at this term that we will move into a discussion of Śrī Rādhā.

Starting in Lesson 1, and several times since then, we've explained the borderland "region" that exists "between" the material and spiritual worlds. We've put the last words, "region" and "between", in quotes because we want to point out that such

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words are not exactly accurate ways of describing this borderland state. This is because it is not a physical “place”. The borderland we speak of is more like a dimension of consciousness.

When we discussed the gunas, the forces of māyā’s world of illusion, that influence our personalities, our decisions, and our activities in this world, we also told you that **the gunas are “the doers” in this world**, and, it is because they play this role, that we are wrong to feel that “I am the doer”. Furthermore, the Sanskrit word that is translated as “false ego” refers directly to this misconception that we are the driving force, the doers, of material activities.

In this borderland state of consciousness, there is no doer because the gunas do not exist there. Without these doers, there is also no activity there, and there is no variety as well. The jīvas who exist there maintain their individuality, but they lack personality due to this lack of variety. For a devotee, such a state is considered hellish, for there is no opportunity to serve the Lord there.

In the spiritual world however, we find even more variety than we find here. We also find highly developed personalities and an unlimited number of activities. So, if we, the jīvas, are not the doers there, we ask you to ponder this question: **What is it that creates the activities and varieties in the spiritual world?**

In answer to that question, we are going to share **a quote from Śrīla Gurudeva** with you. Although this is a short quote, it is full of deep and essential truths. In fact, it is so critical, and so important that bringing it into our hearts can lead us to very wonderful understandings about what prema really is and why Lord Caitanya has told us that it is the goal of our life. Therefore, before you read this quote, please take a moment, close your eyes, and say a short prayer to Śrīla Gurudeva, asking him to reveal the truths of his words to you and bring them into your heart.

In Rādhā-kunda (a very special pond where Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa enjoy pastimes together) there is oh so much prema. The flood of prema there is so great that all of Vṛndāvana is inundated by it. Even Kṛṣṇa comes and is submerged in that flood. Sṛmatī Rādhikā is floating on that flood, and both of them are controlled only by the flood of prema. Prema is their supreme doer. So by prema, Kṛṣṇa is dancing, Rādhā is dancing, the gopīs are dancing. Prema herself is also dancing, and whoever she touches will also dance. (The Essence of All Advice)

Śrīla Gurudeva has revealed a great truth here. **In Vṛndāvana, prema is the doer.** The personalities and the activities of all the residents there are created and driven by prema, and thus all variety there is a product of prema as well.

This pond we have mentioned, Rādhā-kunda, also holds many deep and mysterious truths that we will discuss in more detail as this course progresses. Here, we will note that Śrīla Gurudeva has told us that the flood of prema from Rādhā-kunda is so powerful that all of the residents of Vṛndāvana dance in it.

In an upcoming lesson, we will also be talking about the twenty-five principle qualities of Śrī Rādhā. One of those qualities is that She is the reservoir from which the love of all these residents of Vṛndāvana flows. So, this is a mystery: If She is the reservoir of this prema, how can the prema that flows from Rādhā-kunda be the doer that causes Her to dance?

The answer to this riddle is given to us by **Śrīla Gurudeva** when he tells us:

Rādhā-kunda is Śrī Rādhā, (ibid). So if this is true, then it is **Śrī Rādhā who makes both Śrī Kṛṣṇa and all of the other residents of Vṛndāvana dance, and it is from Her that all prema flows**, and yes, this is the fact.

This deep truth is confirmed by the Lord Himself when He states,

I am the full spiritual truths and I am composed of complete bliss, but the prema of Śrī Rādhā drives Me mad. I do not know

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

the strength of Her prema. The prema of Śrī Rādhā is my guru and I am Her dancing pupil. Her prema makes Me dance various novel dances. (C.C. Ādī 4. 122-124)

So how are we to understand this? How can the Supreme Lord be overwhelmed by anyone or anything? How can He have a guru? Is He not the original guru—Śrī Guru—with a capital “G”?

Let’s listen to what an exalted god brother of Śrīla Gurudeva, **Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja** has said on the importance of Śrī Rādhā, to see if we can begin to enter into these mysteries and bring them into our heart.

The previous ācāryas in our line have said, “You should practice your deep, emotion filled worship and meditation on Śrī Kṛṣṇa (hari-bhajana) under the guidance of the root, the original person who is the reservoir of all these love-filled moods and emotions. When the question is asked regarding who is this original reservoir, many of us do not know that She is Sṛmatī Rādhikā. And then following Her are all Her closest and dear most friends and maidservants. It is imperative to serve under the guidance of the original reservoir of all the moods and emotions of prema, Rādhārāṇī. This service (sevā) will be successful and beautiful in all respects. (Published in “Rays of the Harmonist”)

These are some of the great truths about Śrī Rādhā that we have been telling you will be revealed in this course, and, as we move forward, more will be revealed to you. For now, we ask you to pray to all of our ācāryas for their mercy and guidance as you meditate on these truths and try to bring them into your heart.

Having stepped away from our discussion on Lord Caitanya’s verse, where He prays for ahaitukī (pure unalloyed, unmotivated) bhakti, let’s return now to further examine the truths He has instructed us on, and how what we have just shared continues to play a part in the spiritual realities that we need to understand as we become more and more aware of what the goal of our life is and how we are to reach it.

Śrīla Gurudeva has given us a very wonderful book on the eight verses that were composed by Lord Caitanya, which he has simply and appropriately called, “**Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka**”, which can be translated as “**The Eight Instructions**”. In this book, he has broken down the meaning of the word “**ahaitukī**” and he has told us that **this type of pure bhakti is composed of seven main principles**. We’re going to share those with you now and discuss how they relate to the various topics we’re looking at in the first parts of this lesson.

Ahaitukī Bhakti

One very prominent feature of many of the books written by Śrīla Gurudeva is the fact that he relies so heavily on the works of the exalted gurus in our line that come before him. In some of these books, the vast majority of what he wrote is simply a translation of their commentaries on earlier works. In his book on the eight instructions of Lord Caitanya, he has also followed this pattern, therefore, although we have attributed this work to him, the section where the characteristics of ahaitukī (uh-hie-too-kee) bhakti are listed is actually in the commentary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura.

We have shared this with you not because it is especially important for you to know the exact details about the source of this information, but instead, we wanted to glorify the humble writing of Śrīla Gurudeva, and, in addition, to point out how relying on the words of our previous ācāryas is a common, respected, and powerful way of conveying the truths of the Vedas. And therefore, with these facts in mind, we hope you will begin to appreciate the quotes we share even more, and thus also begin to pay specific attention to them, and to even cherish them as you read and study these lessons.

In listing these characteristics, we will share both the Sanskrit and English translations. In this particular case, you need not learn all of these terms, as some will not appear again in this course, but still, we will include them in our glossary at the end

of this lesson.

The main reason we are sharing the Sanskrit is to bring your attention to a few specific points about how these characteristics relate to teachings we will share in these lessons.

The seven characteristics of ahaitukī bhakti are:

- 1) It is entirely devoid of any result seeking mentality—**phala-anusandhāna-rahita**;
- 2) It is located entirely in the spiritual dimension and all of the qualities of this dimension are present within it—**cinmaya-svabhāva-āśraya**;
- 3) All of the characteristics and potencies of Kṛṣṇa's bliss are fully embodied within it—**kṛṣṇānanda-rūpa**;
- 4) It is totally and perfectly pure—**śuddha**;
- 5) It is exclusive/one-pointed—**kevala**;
- 6) It is unmixed—**amiṣṛā**;
- 7) It is completely free from all material attachments—**akiñcana**.

If you are slowly, carefully, and attentively studying these lessons, then you may have noticed that some of the Sanskrit words that are used to describe ahaitukī-bhakti bhakti have appeared before. For example, earlier in this very lesson, when we shared some various terms for pure bhakti, we mentioned number 5, kevala, or exclusive and one-pointed bhakti, this aspect of ahaitukī-bhakti refers to several things.

First, we can say that **kevala-bhakti focuses only on the original and Supreme Personality of God, Śrī Kṛṣṇa**. This exclusive worship therefore excludes both the worship of any demigod and even the worship of all other forms of the Lord, and, in an even higher sense, it even excludes the worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in any form other than the cowherd boy (gopa) of Vṛndāvana. As we've also mentioned, this one-pointed focus will be even further narrowed once we determine what are own relationship with Kṛṣṇa is in our eternal, original, personal, and unique spiritual form and personality (svarūpa). This is because, depending upon our svarūpa, we will only focus on Kṛṣṇa in one of His three "ages"—that of an infant/toddler (up to 5 "years" old), that of a young boy (6 to 10), or that of a blooming youth (11 to 15).

In our translation of Lord Caitanya's verse, we used the term "pure" for ahaitukī, and, as number 4 in the list of characteristics show, **purity, śuddha, is in fact included within ahaitukī-bhakti**. Like kevala (exclusive worship) the term can describe various aspects of this topmost bhakti. For instance, it can be said to refer to the fact that it is **untouched and uninfluenced by the forces of material nature (the gunas)**. This aspect of its purity was covered by the word "uttamā" in the list of symptoms that we shared last month.

There is however another very interesting and important way that we can understand how the śuddha aspect of ahaitukī-bhakti applies, and therefore we'll introduce it to you now.

When we discussed the gunas, we told you that, although they are all material influences, and therefore not totally pure, the best of the gunas, sattva-guna (the mode of goodness), can be purifying in some ways. For example, if we are influenced by sattva-guna, we will lead a clean lifestyle, eat wholesome foods, and acquire useful knowledge. For these reasons, in some cases, our ācāryas have even translated sattva as "pure".

Above and beyond this material sattva there is another type of **sattva (suh-twuh) that is not a part of the material dimension, this is known as śuddha-sattva, or viśuddha-sattva**. (Here, the prefix "vi" indicates an expansion and concentration of this goodness or purity.)

If we simply translated this term, **śuddha-sattva** in a very basic way, we might say it means **"pure goodness" or even "pure purity"**, but such terms fail to convey the real import of what śuddha-sattva is and why it is an important part of our examination of what ahaitukī-bhakti is as well.

As we look into these truths, we want to remind you that Lord Caitanya Himself, who took on the role of a practitioner of bhakti-yoga, has given us this verse as a powerful and meaningful instruction. He has, by His own example, taught us what it is that we are to pray for, and therefore, it is vitally important for us to do our very best to deeply understand every aspect of His message and exactly why it is that He wants us to pray for this ahaitukī-bhakti.

At the very beginning of this course, way back in Lesson 1, we told you that prema is eternally established in your heart; that it is not something to be gained from another source; and we have gone on to discuss how it is simply covered over by māyā. Of course, we have also done our best to begin to explain how it is that we can remove the illusions, the dirt, that keeps our prema buried there.

In sharing all these truths with you, we have also repeatedly stressed the fact that we must **practice** bhakti-yoga. We must actively perform such things as hearing about, remembering, chanting and, glorifying the names, forms, qualities, associates, and pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Having made this particular instruction such a continuing focus of these lessons, we have even gone so far as to tell you that you do not understand them if you are not engaging in these practices.

Having made these points, this next teaching on śuddha-sattva may even seem to contradict some of the things we've shared so far, but as we closely look at it, we will find that it does not do so.

In Lesson 17, we talked about giving gradual instructions, using the example of the parent who tells her young child, "Don't touch that!", when the child moves toward the stove, but who then, later on, encourages the child to learn the proper way to touch the stove so that he can cook his own breakfast.

So, in a similar way, the teaching we will share on śuddha-sattva is merely a more advanced teaching that was originally tailored to fit the truths we were first trying to share with you.

When the mother told the child not to touch the stove, she did so to prevent him from burning himself, and, when she later teaches him how to use it, that original "don't touch" warning is still included, for the child will still not be touching those parts of the stove that could burn him.

We have told you that you must take action, that you must practice bhakti-yoga, and this "do touch" aspect of its proper performance will always hold true, however, there is a very subtle aspect as to how these practices will work to uncover the prema in our hearts that we now wish to fully clarify to you.

When we hear, chant, and remember Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, it is not our own efforts that clears away the dirt that covers our prema, that removes our illusions, that allows us to escape from the prison of māyā's amusement park.

Imagine yourself buried deeply underground, with every single part of your body tightly packed up against the soil, with absolutely no freedom of movement, no "wiggle room" whatsoever. In that condition; can you think of a way that you could dig yourself out of the ground?

In the lesson where we discussed anāthas, the unwanted obstacles that obstruct us on the bhakti path, we told you that we are not personally able to remove these obstacles, that only the Lord has the ability to cleanse our heart of them. In this same way, we do not personally remove the dirt from our hearts by our own efforts. It is only the Lord, and His direct representatives such as Śrī guru that have the potency to do this.

This point we are raising and presenting to you may seem minor or insignificant, especially because the line between our own efforts and the true cause of the removal of what covers our prema is so thin, but, as we hope to show, even examining these fine details can be of great value, for they can help us in several ways.

First, they can help us give credit where credit is due. It is wrong, and even offensive for us to try to believe that we are able

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to personally dig ourselves out of a hole where we are buried with no wiggling room.

Second, by giving up the idea that we can remove the dirt that buries us there, we also assist ourselves in overcoming our false ego. We do this by understanding that **we are not the doer**; that we cannot become the ultimate cause of anything.

And third, by accepting that only the Lord and His direct representatives can save us, we become increasingly interested in seeking out their association, in hearing from them, in following their instructions, and, by realizing that they are true saviors, we develop great appreciation and gratitude towards them until we finally reach the point where we have such great love for them that we are able to fully surrender our lives to them.

Now, knowing that we can benefit in all of these ways as we gather an understanding of these truths let us share a quote from **Lord Caitanya** with you:

*Nitya-siddha Kṛṣṇa-prema sādhya kabhu naya
Śravanādī suddha-citte karaye udaya*

Nitya-siddha—**eternally established**; Kṛṣṇa-prema—**pure love for Kṛṣṇa**; sādhya—**to be gained**; kabhu—**at any time**; naya—**not**; śravana-ādī—**by hearing, etc.**; suddha—**purified**; citte—**in the heart**; karaye udaya—**awakens**. (C.C. Madhya 22.107)

On this quote, we are going to share two translations with you. The first was given to us by **Śrīla Prabhupāda**.

Pure love for Kṛṣṇa is eternally established in the heart of the living entities. It is not something to be gained from another source. When the heart is purified by hearing and chanting, this love naturally awakens. (C.C. Madhya 22.107)

Śrī Gurudeva has translated this verse in this way.

Kṛṣṇa-prema is an eternally established reality; it is not brought about by sādhana (engaging in bhakti-yoga practices). It automatically manifests itself in the heart by the performance of the various limbs of bhakti such as hearing, chanting and so on. (Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu: Commentary)

In explaining this verse, **Śrī Gurudeva** tells us that although **Śrī Kṛṣṇa** appears in this world, we should not think that He takes birth here.

He then says:

Similarly, one should not think that sādhana gives birth to spiritual emotions (bhāva). Rather bhāva automatically manifest when the senses have been purified by sādhana. (ibid)

We are now going to use a material example in order to try to help you understand this subtle distinction.

If we place one end of an iron rod into an extremely hot fire, the other end, that is not in or near the fire, will initially still be cool. However, over time, the heat from the fire will work its way to that end outside of the fire, and, if we touch it then, it will burn us.

In this case, although we can say that we put one end of the rod into the fire, it would be incorrect to say that we made either end of the rod hot, for the detailed fact of the matter is that it was the fire that heated the rod, and, it was due to long term association with the fire that the heat was transferred throughout the rod until it all became hot.

Similarly, all we can do is put the senses, the ears, tongue, mind, etc., into contact with the purifying agents of bhakti, and it is these agents that cleanse the heart and remove the dirt that covers our prema.

In another example, we can think of putting a piece of stained cloth into some bleach, and again, although we may have created the contact, technically speaking it was the bleach that purified the cloth.

We do have free choice. We can choose to associate with persons and engage in activities that will bury the prema even

deeper in our hearts and increase the height and strength of the walls in the prison of illusions that māyā has us trapped in, or, if we are wise, we can put ourselves into contact with the supremely purifying agents such as the words and instructions of **Śrī guru**, the Holy Names, and remembrance of the Lord, and in that way, **THEY WILL REMOVE THE DIRT, THEY will break down the walls of māyā's prison house, and THEY WILL AWAKEN THE PREMA** that is eternally established in our hearts.

We cannot do this. All we can do is put ourselves into contact with these agents, and, if we do so with faith, and with a true desire to become their servants, they will enter our hearts and awaken our prema.

On a similar note, we can use this reality to show how the various bhakti practices, and the Holy Names Themselves are a direct manifestation of the Supreme Lord, for ultimately, it is only He Himself, along with His potencies, that can accomplish this cleansing purification. So if, by contact of these aspects/manifestations/representatives of Him, our prema can be awakened, then all of these agents must indeed be a part of Him.

By understanding these truths, we will overcome the notions of the false ego which tells, “I am doing this,” and we will attain the proper, humble position where we feel, “Lord, I am totally incapable of doing anything. Only by Your power and mercy do I have any hope of escaping from the prison of illusions that I am trapped in. Please give me Your shelter and guidance and help me become Your truly dedicated servant.” So yes, we can put ourselves into contact with these agents, and they can awaken our prema, but we cannot do this on our own, and we cannot do this without their assistance.

We apologize to you for having gone off on such a tangent, but as we’ve said, there is a gradual stage of progression in most all teachings in life, from “Don’t touch that!” to cooking our own meals, and now seemed like a good time to discuss the fact that it is not our own efforts that awaken our prema, it is the mercy and the purifying agents of the Lord who do. This is a subtle point, but it is one we should understand, and we hope our efforts have assisted you in doing so.

We know we’ve strayed away from the main subject we were discussing for so long now that you’ve likely forgotten what it was, so, along with apology for doing so, let us also take a moment or two to bring this lesson back on point.

What we are discussing is Lord Caitanya’s prayer/verse, wherein He says He is not interested in material things, for His only desire is to attain ahaitukī-bhakti in birth after birth.

We then listed the characteristics of this type of bhakti and we began to explain them to you. We told you that ahaitukī-bhakti is exclusive or one-pointed (kevala) in that it focuses only on the cowherd boy form of the Lord, and then, ultimately, on only one of His three “ages”.

We then said the characteristic of pureness (śuddha) can refer to the fact that ahaitukī-bhakti is entirely beyond the influence of the gunas, which was spoken of as uttamā [above (ut) the mode of ignorance (tamo)].

We also said that this śuddha (pure) aspect relates to śuddha-sattva, which can mean “pure goodness” or “pure purity” and it was from there that we went into our discussion on the fact that it is the purifying agents/potencies/manifestations of the Lord that awaken our prema, and it is not we ourselves who do so.

We explain this because we wanted you to have these truths, but also because this same concept relates directly to what śuddha-sattva is and to why, as a part of ahaitukī-bhakti, it is something that Lord Caitanya wants us to pray for and desire.

There is a very special mood, a very special type of love within the hearts of the residents of Vṛndāvana. This mood of love is called śuddha-sattva, or, in some places, it is called viśuddha-sattva. **Since it is this mood that we most cherish, and**

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

since no one can give what they do not possess, it is only from these residents that we can attain this love-drenched mood.

And what happens when this mood begins to awaken in our hearts?

When Lord Caitanya was here, He personally described so many truths for us, and this is one of the reasons that He is known to be even more merciful than He was when He appeared as Lord Kṛṣṇa, in His cowherd boy form. When He was here as Lord Kṛṣṇa He engaged in so many wonderful pastimes with the residents of Vṛndāvana, and later, as a king, He also took part in many pastimes, such as the killing of many demonic kings and the speaking of the Bhagavad-Gītā to Arjuna. At another time, He spoke a great set of instructions to His uncle, but never did He describe in great detail the relationships between Himself, the jīvas and māyā (sambandha), the path of bhakti (abidheya) and the goal of life (prayojana).

However, as Lord Caitanya, He gave detailed explanations of all these truths, and, by His mercy, all of His teachings have been meticulously recorded so that those who came after Him can learn this knowledge as well.

In an extremely detailed conversation with Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, where He described these relationships, the path, and the goal, He mentions this śuddha-sattva, and He tells us how it begins to awaken our prema.

As we have told you, the first stirrings of prema within the heart is known as bhāva (spiritual emotions), and, in this next verse Lord Caitanya tells us what happens when this śuddha-sattva, this mood of the residents of Vṛndāvana enters the heart.

The true nature of śuddha-sattva is very unique and quite distinct as well. In order to help us understand what it is, it has been compared to a ray of the sun of prema. When that ray enters the heart, the different tastes associated with experiencing the sweetness of the Lord begin to awaken in the heart, and this causes the heart to become very soft. Then, in this softened condition, the emotions (bhāva) that arise due to experiencing these tastes also awaken. (C.C. Madhya 23.5)

So, when Lord Caitanya prays for ahaitukī-bhakti, He is also praying for this śuddha-sattva to enter His heart. Of course we may feel that it was already present there, but in truth, there is a great mystery here for the **primary reasons that Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes on the form of Lord Caitanya is so that He can personally experience the tastes and emotions of Śrī Rādhā.** The finer details of this truth is beyond the scope of this lesson, but we will share a bit with you, and two quotes from Śrīla Gurudeva in this regard as well.

In the relationship between Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, there is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the object of love, and Śrī Rādhā, the reservoir of love, the sender of love toward the object. Of course, as in all loving relationships, there is mutual exchange, where He also sends love to Her, but in characterizing Their positions, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is known as the object of love and Śrī Rādhā is known as the shelter, or reservoir from which love flows. In this situation, the experiences of the object of love are different than those of the sender, and thus, as Lord Caitanya, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was able to personally experience the tastes and moods of Śrī Rādhā.

In the following quote, we find this principal is also discussed. In this passage, a devotee was reading from a book by Śrīla Prabhupāda where he had said that one must always engage in “the remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His beloved associates”, and, in commenting on this, Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us:

Which associates must we remember? Those like His friends, His father, His mother, like the gopīs and all others. We should remember those personalities for whom we have a little greed. Don't only remember Kṛṣṇa, otherwise you will be an impersonalist (one who does not accept the eternal variegated forms and pastimes of the Lord). So always see Kṛṣṇa with His associates. We will have to take the moods of His associates, not of Kṛṣṇa. We cannot be like Kṛṣṇa. Who are Kṛṣṇa's dearest

associates? Who? The gopīs. So if anyone is so fortunate to have greed to serve Kṛṣṇa like the gopīs he should meditate on them always, remembering their activities and how they serve Kṛṣṇa.” (Lecture—24 May 1997: Published in “The Essence of All Advice”)

When śuddha-sattva enters our hearts, we can begin to experience these moods, and not in any other way, so, as we explained with sādhana, it is technically not our own efforts that will awaken, first bhāva, then prema, it will be the rays of prema, the moods and emotions of Kṛṣṇa's associates in the form of śuddha-sattva that will soften our hearts, and this is why Lord Caitanya taught us to pray for this ahaitukī-bhakti.

In this next quote, Śrīla Gurudeva tells us that this mood of Kṛṣṇa's associates is also a critical part of our chanting. We know that many of you do not yet have enough knowledge of these associates to even begin to enter into these moods while you chant, and that is fine, but still, we wanted to share this quote because it does teach us one very basic truth, the importance of engaging our mind while we chant, and also because it will begin to teach you why receiving these moods into our hearts is such a critical part of our advancing bhakti practices.

Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us:

You may be chanting, but if your mind is not there, then that chanting goes almost in vain. And if the mind is there, then automatically the mood is there. If someone is chanting, but he is not having the mood of a resident of Vṛndāvana, then there is no relation with Kṛṣṇa, because this relationship comes from the proper mood. In what mood are you chanting this name? And what are you thinking? One should think in this way, “Kṛṣṇa is my beloved; Kṛṣṇa is my child; son; or Kṛṣṇa is my friend.” There should be some relationship...” (ibid)

This mood, and the greed that Śrīla Gurudeva spoke of in the last quote, can seem to come from hearing, and therefore we are going to begin to focus more and more on sharing the histories of Kṛṣṇa and His associates with you, for by hearing these pastimes, our taste for a particular mood and relationship with Kṛṣṇa will begin to awaken in our heart.

Ultimately though, as we have pointed out several times now, we will still need the assistance, meaning the mercy and guidance of one of these associates, before these tastes and emotions will begin to soften our heart, and, in this next quote, we will begin to discuss a topic that we will cover in more detail later in this lesson, the goal of life. We have chosen to share this quote now because it ties these two topics—the śuddha-sattva of ahaitukī-bhakti and the goal of life—in a very interesting way. Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us:

The associates of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana have an unquenchably deep, and overpowering love-filled thirst for Kṛṣṇa that causes their entire consciousness to absorbed in Him. This thirst becomes so intense that they are on the verge of giving up their life if they are not able to serve Kṛṣṇa. For these associates, this thirst, which is called rāga, is part of their soul, part of their ātma. To attain their moods and perform their types of services is our goal. (Lecture—18 June 1996)

NOTE: We wish to point out that these associates exist as fully spiritual beings, so there is of course no such thing as giving up their life, yet still, this type of consciousness exists there, and in separation from Kṛṣṇa, these associates can in fact enter into a death-like, comatose state.

In teaching us to pray for ahaitukī-bhakti, Lord Caitanya has taught us to pray for this śuddha-sattva, these moods, to enter our hearts and soften them so that our own spiritual emotions (bhāvas) can awaken.

This great truth, that our goal is to attain the moods and services of these associates, will be focused on more and more in upcoming lessons.

Returning now to the other symptoms of ahaitukī-bhakti, we find that **Lord Caitanya has also prayed for love-drenched**

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

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service (bhakti) that is “unmixed” (amiṣrā). This aspect of ahaitukī-bhakti was fully covered in the symptoms of pure (śuddha) bhakti that we shared last month. In that list, unmixed bhakti was covered by the phrase jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam, meaning that **pure bhakti is not mixed with other practices.**

Pure, ahaitukī-bhakti is also completely free from all material attachments (akiñcana). In this state, one considers that he has nothing but Kṛṣṇa, that no material possession belongs to him, that he is utterly destitute. For those in the renounced order of life (sannyāsa) this denotes one who accepts only the bare necessities for his bodily maintenance. The topmost examples of this are those like Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, who possessed nothing but a garment for his body, and who, having no fixed resident, would simply take shelter under a tree.

Others, who on the surface seem to possess more, are also consider possession less as well, for although they may live in the midst of material opulence, they are completely devoid of any desire for material enjoyment and they are completely aware that nothing belongs to them because everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa. An example of this is Arjuna.

A similar symptom of ahaitukī-bhakti is that one situated in it is entirely devoid of result seeking mentality. In this state, one acts only out of a desire to serve Kṛṣṇa, and whatever results come of this he accepts as the Lord’s mercy.

The next symptom, that all of the characteristics and potencies of Kṛṣṇa’s bliss is fully embodied in it (kṛṣṇānanda-rūpa) is interesting for several reasons.

First, by this quality, we find that **pure bhakti gives pleasure to Kṛṣṇa.** In the verse we shared last month, we spoke of endeavors performed in a favorable mood or without any hostility. The exact Sanskrit word used there was chosen because, in some unique circumstances, pure bhakti can seem to cause Kṛṣṇa distress.

The prime example that is used to portray this situation occurred when Kṛṣṇa was just a toddler. One day, while His mother was breast feeding Him some milk, which she was planning to use to provide more nourishment for Him, and also to prepare tasty treats, began to boil over and splash into the fire. At that time, removing Kṛṣṇa from her lap, she sat Him down and went off to save the milk. In discussing this situation, Śrīla Gurudeva tells us,

This action was not pleasing to Kṛṣṇa. His tiny lips began to tremble with anger. In this example, because the activity of mother Yaśodā was displeasing to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it would seem to be excluded from the definition of bhakti...

The activity of mother Yaśodā, from the external point of view, appeared to be unfavorable because it was seen to be displeasing to Kṛṣṇa. But His mother has no trace of an attitude that is displeasing to Kṛṣṇa. She is always permeated with an attitude that is completely agreeable towards Kṛṣṇa, being constantly attentive to rearing Him and looking after His welfare.

The devotees naturally display even greater love towards those things that are favorable towards the service of Kṛṣṇa than towards Kṛṣṇa directly. Kṛṣṇa was to be nourished with the milk that was boiling on the stove. It was only with the idea of Kṛṣṇa’s future benefit that Mother Yaśodā left Him aside to tend to the milk; therefore, this action is also bhakti. (Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu)

So if ahaitukī-bhakti gives pleasure to Kṛṣṇa, how does His crying fit into this category. Here, we need only consider two points from the above quote. **First, His mother’s activities only appeared to displease Him “from the external point of view.”** This tells us that, although He expressed anger, internally He was relishing the loving service of His mother. **And secondly, His mother saved the milk for His “future benefit”,** thus ultimately, when He was to receive this milk, and the tasty treats she would make from it, He would surely feel great pleasure.

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

Another aspect of this symptom is that the **bliss produced by ahaitukī-bhakti also brings pleasure to His associates as well.** As we’ve already mentioned, ahaitukī-bhakti is devoid of a result seeking mentality, so it is not that the servants of Kṛṣṇa seek this pleasure, but, since it is a naturally occurring result of their serving Him, they accept this as His mercy, just as openly as they would accept any suffering that were to arise as a result of their service.

Actually, the bliss that is experienced by pure devotees is totally inseparable from bhakti, therefore, although pure devotees do not seek this result (remember—pure bhakti is entirely devoid of result seeking mentality), they cannot possibly avoid it. These points are noted in the following quote from the **Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam**:

“My dear Lord, pure devotees, who have become free from all material desires by serving the lotus feet of great souls are always merged in an ocean of spiritual bliss and, as such, they are always satisfied simply by glorifying Your qualities, which in and of themselves bring good fortune to all. For them, there is nothing also to aspire for.” (S.B. 9.4.49)

For one who has not yet tasted this bliss, it can be hard to understand and accept that such amazing and unmatched joy could be derived simply from glorifying Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, remembering Them, or chanting Their names, so, although no material examples can ever fully express spiritual truths, let us share a commonly used example with you as we do our best to convey the truths of the science of bhakti to you.

A fish cannot be happy out of water. If we take a fish, and try to make it happy by taking it out of water in order to bring it to exciting places or show it wonderful things, it will only suffer. This is because the water is its natural environment and it can only be happy when it is there and doing the things that it is naturally designed to do.

Similarly, our naturally environment is to be amongst devotees and serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only activity that we are naturally designed to do. If we are taken out of this environment, we cannot be happy. Even though it is by our own decisions that we remain outside of this environment, as we chase the so-called happiness that is found in māyā’s amusement park, we will never find true happiness there. However, like the fish, when we are in our natural environment we can truly be happy.

Even by this example, we may be able to comprehend the fact that **it is only bhakti that can satisfy our true needs, and it is only when these needs are fulfilled that we can be truly happy.** As we seriously dedicate ourselves to our bhakti practices, the obstacles that keep us from experiencing this happiness will begin to fade away, and then, there is absolutely no doubt that we will begin to feel great joy as we walk along the bhakti path on our journey to prema.

The final **quality of ahaitukī-bhakti** which we will now explore with you is that **it is located entirely in the spiritual dimension and all of the qualities of that dimension are present within it.**

In explaining the various aspects of this quality we will, out of necessity, be reviewing and repeating some of the qualities we’ve already mentioned. This is because, as we shall see, those qualities are always automatically included whenever we talk of the spiritual dimension. But we will also be discussing some other points as well.

When we speak of the spiritual dimension, we basically speak of a level of consciousness. Although the Vedas speak of such things as “spiritual planets” or “petals of lotus”, we must not allow ourselves to think of these things in physical terms, for **there is nothing physical in the spiritual realm.**

If we think in physical terms, we will naturally consider such things as limited sizes, whereas, in the spiritual realm, such limitations do not exist. This is why **the soul has been described**

as a spark of spiritual consciousness and the Lord has been described as an unlimited spiritual consciousness. If we try to imagine the limits of a consciousness, we can perhaps understand that, although we are described as “sparks” of that substance, even this term, spark, is a physical concept that involves limits, whereas, in truth, such a term is used only to give us some idea, some point of reference, so that we can try to picture the vast difference between our consciousness and that of the Lord.

The fact that these descriptions do not pertain to physical locations is exemplified by the descriptions that are used to try to help us understand “the borderland”, “the shoreline”, where the jīvas were originally located. This is because our gurus have explained that this is also not a physical place. Although it has been described in such ways as a river and an ocean it does not have any such “form” for it is only a state of consciousness where neither the doer of the material realm, māyā, nor the doer of the spiritual realm, prema, exist.

In the spiritual realm EVERYTHING IS CONSCIOUSNESS, it is aware, EVERYTHING IS ETERNAL, and EVERYTHING IS EXPERIENCING UNBOUNDED HAPPINESS.

The Sanskrit terms for these reality are:

cit—consciousness, awareness;
sat—eternality, existence; and
ānanda—absolute bliss.

There is a very sacred Vedic text that we will be introducing you to later in this lesson that begins with a very famous verse. We’ll save our discussion of that text until later, but for now we wish to share this verse with you.

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
sac-cid-ānanda-vigraḥ
anādir-ādir-govindaḥ
sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*

īśvaraḥ--the controller; **paramaḥ**--supreme;
kṛṣṇaḥ--Lord Kṛṣṇa; **sat**—eternally existing; **cid**—consciousness, awareness; **ānanda**—absolute bliss; **vigraḥ**--whose form; **anādir**—without beginning; **ādir**—the origin; **govindaḥ**--Lord Govinda; **sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam**—the cause of all causes

Kṛṣṇa, who is also known as Govinda, is the Supreme controller. He has a form that is entirely composed of eternality, consciousness, and absolute bliss. He is the beginningless origin of all and He is the prime cause of all causes. (Śrī Brahmā-Saṁhitā—text 1)

The Vedas tell us that we are “sparks” of that same consciousness, and therefore we also have eternal forms which are entirely composed of consciousness and absolute bliss. It is only due to our own decisions to turn our consciousness away from the Lord that we lose touch with the blissful aspect of ourselves.

Pure bhakti, ahaitukī-bhakti, is however entirely composed of and situated in the spiritual dimension. It is therefore also eternal, fully conscious, and blissful. This is why, by bringing ourselves into contact with it, the spiritual qualities that it is composed of begins to move into and permeate our consciousness, just as the heat of the fire moves, molecule by molecule, through the iron rod.

Having shared this verse with you, we are now going to dive a bit deeper into the science of bhakti. We are now going to show how these spiritual qualities of the Lord’s form directly relate to bhakti, and, in doing so, we will also reveal yet another truth about why Śrī Rādhā is an integral part of this science. Although these truths may seem a bit complex, we can gain valuable understandings by studying them, and thus we ask you to please do your best to absorb them into your heart.

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

We’re going to start off this look into these truths by using a material example.

Think of a battery. A battery is an object that contains energy. If we use that energy to perform some task, say light the bulb in a flashlight, we would have to say it was the energy from the battery, and not the battery itself which caused the bulb to glow.

Similarly, we can say that Kṛṣṇa’s form is the battery, and that everything He accomplishes from that form is carried out by energies that flow from that form.

For each of the qualities of His form, eternality, consciousness, and bliss, there is a corresponding energy. Again, we will share the Sanskrit terms for these energies with you and include them in the glossary, although we will also again tell you that your studies will not necessarily be incomplete if you do not learn these terms. We must provide them however because they will be used in other lessons and thus, for those who are interested in learning them, we will include such terms in these lessons.

We know these last few lessons have been especially full of these scientific terms, so, before we share even more of them with you, we want to refer you to a quote that discusses why we should all be very enthusiastic to seriously study this science.

One of our founding fathers, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī teaches us:

Only bhakti can lead one to the Supreme Personality of God. Only bhakti can help a devotee meet the Supreme Lord face-to-face. The Supreme Lord is attracted by bhakti, and as such, the ultimate supremacy of Vedic knowledge rests in knowing the science of bhakti. (Pṛīti-sandarbhā)

We should all want to learn this topmost knowledge from this greatest of all sciences.

Three Aspects—Three Energies

In earlier lessons, we have spoken of the Lord’s “personal energy”. This energy, which comprises His topmost potency, is called svarūpa-śakti.

The Sanskrit verse we shared above told us that the Lord’s form is composed of three aspects or ingredients—existence, awareness or consciousness, and bliss. Using the example of the battery, we can think of these as the elements that the battery itself is made of.

When these aspects of the Lord’s form are transformed into energies, so that they can flow from Him and perform various tasks, these energies (śaktis) are given their own names. Relying on quotes from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, we are now going to explain the specific functions of these various śaktis, and again, as with an earlier teaching in this lesson, we will continue to reveal the role that Śrī Rādhā plays in this wonderful science.

As Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the complete possessor of all śaktis, Śrī Rādhā is His complete śakti. In fact, She is the manifestation of His complete personal energy (svarūpa-śakti). So that They can enact and relish their pastimes, Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are eternally separate, but they are also eternally inseparable, just as musk and its scent are mutually inseparable, and fire and its heat cannot be separate from each other. The personification of His personal energy, Śrī Rādhā, conducts activities through three aspects of this energy. (Jaiva Dharma)

The Lord’s personal energy performs three functions, which correspond to the three aspects of His form.

The sat (existence) aspect manifests as sandhinī-śakti.

And Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura tells us:

Sandhinī manifests everything in Vṛndāvana that consists of water, earth, and so on, such as the villages, forests, gardens, and other places where Kṛṣṇa performs His pastimes. It also manifests all the other spiritual objects used in His pastimes, such as His flute, as well as the spiritual bodies of Śrī Rādhā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Their friends, cows, Their servants, and so on. (Jaiva Dharma)

Here, although terms such as “earth” and “water” are used, they do not refer to material forms, and yet, in using these terms,

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it shows us how a famous axiom, “As above, so below”, applies. This world, and its various aspects, such as liquids (water) and solids (earth) are but distorted reflections of spiritual realities, and after we finish our current discussion, we will explore how this applies to the transformation of Kṛṣṇa’s energies

The cit (consciousness/awareness) aspect of the Lord’s form manifests as saṁvit-śaktī, which then acts in the following ways.

The saṁvit-śaktī aspect of the Lord’s personal energy manifest all of the spiritual emotions that arise from the relationships that Kṛṣṇa has with His associates. Through this potency. He also performs all of His activities, such as attracting the gopīs by playing on His flute, taking the cows out to graze, and other pastimes. (Jaiva Dharma)

Earlier, we told you that Śrī Rādhā is a manifestation of the entirety of the Lord’s personal energy, and, while this is true, She is considered to personify one of the aspects of this energy as well.

The ānanda (bliss) aspect of the Lord’s form manifests as hlādinī-śaktī, which then acts as follows.

The hlādinī-śaktī aspect of the Lord’s svarūpa-śaktī manifests as Śrī Rādhā. She gives full spiritual bliss and enjoyment to Kṛṣṇa. She gives full happiness to Him in Her own spiritual form and She also manifests eight primary and distinct moods and emotions (bhāvas) which become personified as Her eight principal friends. These personalities are direct extensions of Her own personality. In addition to this, Her four different moods of service are manifests into four types of friends, each of which is unlimited in number, and all of which partake in increasing the bliss of the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. (Jaiva Dharma)

So by these truths, we get a very nice picture of how Kṛṣṇa manifests everything in the spiritual realm through three types of energies, each of which arises from one of the aspects of His own personal form. We are aware that it can be difficult to picture these truths in an easily absorbed way, and therefore, in order to assist you in your efforts, we will include a chart at the end of this lesson, where we have tried to present these teachings in a simplified and easily followed way.

Before we move on to discuss which energies of the Lord manifest these objects that have not yet been discussed, such as the jīva and māyā, we want to point out some details about the last **bold** quote, where the direct personal expansions of the bliss potency are presented.

In our presentation of the symptoms of ahaitukī-bhakti (which we are still in the midst of) we said that it is an embodiment of the characteristics and potencies of Kṛṣṇa’s bliss. Since this last quote tells us that Śrī Rādhā is the personification of the energy of His bliss, we can properly reach the conclusion that ahaitukī-bhakti and Her are also inseparable. And in fact, this truth is also covered in this quote as well, for it tells us that like ahaitukī-bhakti, Śrī Rādhā “gives full spiritual bliss and enjoyment to Kṛṣṇa”.

As all of these pieces begin to fall into place, our understanding of the paramount importance of Śrī Rādhā in our bhakti practices should begin to come into focus.

Additionally, we will point out that **all of the topmost friends and intimate associates of Śrī Rādhā are actually Her own personal expansions**. There’s a famous saying, “**Variety is the spice of life**”. Since Śrī Rādhā’s only desire is to give pleasure to Kṛṣṇa, She has manifested all of these varieties of female admirers in order to increase the range of moods, emotions, forms, and pastimes that She can use to expand and increase the types of pleasure that She is able to provide for Him. In upcoming lessons, we will also reveal how it is that She uses these expansions in order to give us personal instructions on ahaitukī-bhakti so that we can help Her provide pleasure to Her beloved

Kṛṣṇa.

Three Degrees of Energy—Internal, Marginal, and External

Thus far, we have explained how Kṛṣṇa’s personal energy is divided in order to manifest all aspects of the spiritual realm. In this section, we will look at how His energies create everything else that exists as well.

Just as **His personal energy (svarūpa-śaktī)** divides into saṁvit-śaktī, sandhinī-śaktī, and hlādinī-śaktī, **it is also divided into three energies of action. The first of these is known as His internal energy (antaraṅga-śaktī). Since all of the eternal characteristics of His svarūpa-śaktī are fully present in His internal energy, there is little difference between them, other than the fact that they are given different names to distinguish the specific functions they carry out.** This is just like the mind and the intelligence, which are also two separate terms used to represent the processing of thoughts and information. This internal energy can also properly be referred to as spiritual or superior energy because it does not fall under the influence of the material gunas. **As this pure internal energy is the activating agent of all things spiritual, the spiritual world is the work of this śaktī.**

The second activating energy of Kṛṣṇa’s personal energy is the taṭastā-śaktī (marginal energy). Since all jīvas are composed of this energy, it is also known as jīva śaktī. In the marginal energy, all of the eternal characteristics of the Lord’s personal energy are present, but only to a minute degree. This is why the jīva can fall under the influence of māyā and her gunas.

The third aspect of Kṛṣṇa’s personal energy that carries out activities is bahiraṅga-śaktī, the Lord’s external energy. Also known as māyā-śaktī, it is this energy which creates the illusions of the material worlds. All of the eternal characteristics of the Lord’s personal energy are also present in His external energy, but in a distorted way.

So now, using the terms that we feel you will find easiest to remember and understand, we will summarize these truths for you.

The Lord’s personal form is composed of eternality, awareness/consciousness, and bliss. These components, when converted into energies are known as sandhinī-śaktī, saṁvit-śaktī, and hlādinī-śaktī. The sum total of these energies, which is known as the Lord’s personal energy, becomes personified as Śrī Rādhā, and from Her, all of Her dear most associates are expanded in order to increase the variety of Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure and the magnitude of their pastimes together.

The Lord’s personal energy converts into three active principles: His internal energy, which is at work in the spiritual worlds; His marginal energy, the jīva, which can fall under the influence of māyā, even though he is, in truth, superior to her; and His external energy, māyā, which puts the jīva into illusion and which all material objects are composed of.

If you carefully study and meditate on the truths in these last two paragraphs, while seeking the mercy and guidance of Śrī guru, you will eventually be able to bring these teachings into your heart.

When Energy Meets Energy

The Interaction of the Lord’s Śaktis

When we carefully study the truths that we have just shared about the Lord’s energies, we come to a very interesting conclusion. **Everything is made of energy.** Depending upon how much science you have studied, this reality may be very vague, or completely clear to you. The physicists who study the elemental structure of things at the most basic levels agree that even those objects that we consider to be “solid” are actually not, for the atoms they are composed of contain vast amounts of space. The reason we perceive things as solid can be understood by the example of a spinning fan blade.

For someone who has never seen the blade in a stopped

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position, it appears to be solid when spinning, and, if they attempt to put their hand through it, they will hit the blade, further solidifying the illusion that the blade fills the entire space where it appears to be.

Similarly, atoms are like fan blades that exist in three dimensions. These atoms look like the solar system, where many tiny planets, called electrons, spin in all directions, at incredible speeds, around the center, the nucleus, of the atom. Not being able to see this, we believe objects are solid, but if we could somehow stop all of these atoms, all at the same time, we would see that there were only billions of tiny objects suspended in space with huge amounts of emptiness between them.

We've taken a moment to discuss this truth in order to talk about another scientific detail which we will then tie into the spiritual teaching we intend to share.

Scientists tell us that **energy can never be destroyed, it can only be transformed.** With this in mind, we can see why **all of the transformations of the Lord's personal energy** (internal, marginal (the jīva), and external (māyā)) **possess all of the eternal characteristics of the Lord's personal energy.**

The Vedas also teach us that, at times, the entire material manifestation, all of māyā, does not exist as we know it. Based upon perfectly calculated, extremely vast cycles of time, where the four ages which end in kali-yuga come and go thousands of times, the material universes go through periods where they are manifest and where they are not. If this is so, one may ask, then why is it said that the external energy, māyā, is eternal?

To answer this, we can return to the example of Kṛṣṇa as the battery and all else as energies that flow from Him. When His external energy, māyā, is existing outside of the battery, the material worlds are manifest, but when we put energy into a battery, such as when we charge it, the energy does not cease to exist, it is simply stored in the battery, and later, the same energy can flow out to carry out many types of actions.

Of course Kṛṣṇa never needs "charging", but, at the time of the desolation of the material universes, all of the energy of māyā (His external energy) as well as all of the energy of all jīva s that are currently in the material worlds (His marginal energy), simply flows back into Him, where it is stored until the predetermined cycle of time reaches a point where this same energy reemerges from Him and the jīvas and the matter of māyā become manifest again. And these great cycles and interactions of His energies are just one of the many ways His potencies carry out His wishes.

Next we will look at how His energy of existence (sandhinī-śaktī), His energy of awareness (samvit-śaktī), and his energy of bliss (hlādinī-śaktī), interact with His jīva śaktī, and His māyā-śaktī.

Earlier we told you how these first three energies interact with His internal energy by creating the activities, relationships, emotions, moods, bodies, lakes, gardens, and other objects of the spiritual world, and how His bliss potency becomes personified as His most beloved Śrī Rādhā, and we will now explain how these same energies interact with the jīvas and with māyā and what effects this creates.

First we will look at the ever-existing aspect of these interactions of energies and then we will look at how the trouble making interaction of the jīva with māyā can be corrected and reversed.

Although the jīva is called the marginal energy, he is, as we've said, a minute spark of spiritual consciousness. Due to this fact, **the bliss energy of the Lord is always present in him in the form of pure spiritual happiness. The awareness energy of the Lord is present in the form of pure and complete spiritual knowledge, and the existence energy of the Lord is what comprises the eternal spark of consciousness that the jīva is made of.**

In māyā-śaktī, the bliss energy of the Lord manifests in the form of the temporary material pleasures that are enjoyed

through the senses. The awareness energy is present in the form of material knowledge, and the existence energy manifests itself in the form of all material objects, which includes the temporary bodies, the vehicles that the jīva rides around in. We also want to point out the fact that since all of these energies appear in māyā only in a distorted way, every aspect of their manifestation is distorted as well. **All of the sense pleasures, material knowledge, and bodies in this world are temporary, distorted, and full of misery.**

Unfortunately, for all of the jīvas who are here in this world, we chose to turn our attention toward māyā while situated in the timeless borderland state of consciousness. As soon as we made that decision, our direct contact with, and realization of, the pure bliss and awareness energies of the Lord became covered over by māyā. The original aspect of that covering was the false ego, then the mind/intelligence, and finally the millions of forms of material bodies that we have been riding around in.

Śrī Rādhā-The Energy of Prema

The next truth we want to mention is that **each and every process of bhakti-yoga, when properly performed, is fully composed of the Lord's personal energy, and therefore, since this energy is personified as Śrī Rādhā, it is correct to say that all aspects of ahaitukī-bhakti are also aspects of Her.** In this light we can see why, it is only under Her protection and guidance, and through Her mercy, that we will eventually succeed at removing these coverings, thus connecting ourselves with the pure spiritual bliss and understandings that are an eternal part of who we really are.

Śrīla Prabhupāda expresses these truths in this way:

In fact, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the internal potency of Kṛṣṇa, and She eternally intensifies the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa ... She is the medium that transmits the living entities service to Kṛṣṇa. Devotees in Vṛndāvana therefore seek the mercy of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in order to be recognized as the loving servitors of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (C.C. Ādī 4.56—Purport)

As this course progresses, we will continue to expand on all of the details that tell us how and why Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the central aspect of the topmost level of pure bhakti. and in fact, since we are on the edge of this subject even now, we're going to take a few moments to share some of these truths with you.

This next set of quotes comes from a conversation between Lord Caitanya and one of His closest associates. We have told you that **Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa Himself, existing in a form where He takes on the moods and emotions of Śrī Rādhā so that He can personally understand and taste what She experiences.**

Due to a spiritual mystery that is very deep and filled with complex truths, Lord Caitanya, God Himself needed to "learn" about Śrī Rādhā and Her glories, and it was in the conversation that we will now share a portion of that He gained much of this knowledge.

This conversation is so amazing that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has said that it is the brightest star in the entire sky of spiritual truths. So, both before, and as we study and meditate upon these truths, we should ask Śrī Caitanya and all of our gurus to help us absorb these truths into our hearts.

The speaker here was, at the time of this conversation, the governor of a province in Eastern India, who, despite this position of material wealth and influence, was a pure devotee of the Lord. He met with Lord Caitanya a few times over several days, and, at the end of their meetings he gave up his position in material society to fully dedicate himself to his services to the Lord. His name is Rāmananda, and his position was indicated by the word Rāya. You may at times see his name, followed by his title, and in other places these may be reversed. He was found in our "Guide to Vaiṣṇava Holy Days."

We can picture ourselves now, sitting on the bank of a sacred

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river, as Rāya Rāmananda teaches us these truths.

I have briefly explained the original form and personality of Kṛṣṇa (kṛṣṇa-svarūpa). Now let me give a summary of the spiritual truths regarding the position of Śrī Rādhā.

Kṛṣṇa has unlimited potencies (śaktī's). These can be divided into three main categories. These are His spiritual potency (cit-śaktī), His marginal potency (jīva-śaktī), and His material potency (māyā-śaktī). These potencies of the Lord are also known as internal, marginal, and external. Of these, it is His personal, internal spiritual potency (svarūpa-śaktī) that stands supreme.

“The personal potency of the Lord is fully spiritual, and the jīvas, although inferior to the Lord, are composed of spiritual energy as well. But there is another energy, where all karma takes place, and this third energy is characterized by ignorance of spiritual truths”. (This is a quote from Viṣṇu Purāṇa 6.7.61)

Since Kṛṣṇa's original form is composed of existence, awareness and bliss, His personal energies also manifest in three forms: His is His aspect of bliss, of existence; and of awareness/consciousness.

“My dear Lord, You are the reservoir of all potencies. Our potencies of pleasure (bliss), awareness, and existence are actually just divisions of Your own personal potency. Although the jīvas are actually spiritual, they sometimes experience pleasure, sometimes pain, and sometimes mixtures of these two, but all of this arises because of their being influenced by/covered over by/contaminated by matter/māyā. But because You are completely beyond the influence of māyā, these changes do not affect You. Your personal potency is completely beyond the guṇas, and thus for You there is no such thing as relative pleasure, pleasure mixed with pain, or pain itself.”
(This is a quote from Viṣṇu Purāṇa 1.12.69)

The potency called hlādinī gives Kṛṣṇa pleasure. It is through this potency that Kṛṣṇa personally tastes all spiritual pleasures. Although He is Himself the embodiment of these pleasures, and although He is constantly tasting them, it is His pleasure potency (hlādinī-śaktī) which transfers this pleasure to His devotees and causes them to taste these spiritual pleasures for themselves.

The true essence, the foundational principle of this pleasure potency is called prema, and therefore, even if one simply talks about or explains prema and its characteristics, he will be able to taste some of these pleasures.

The supreme essence, the topmost principle of prema is called mahā bhāva [mahā/great: bhāva/spiritual emotions], and Śrī Rādhā is the personification of this mahābhāva.

Among the gopīs of Vṛndāvana, Śrī Rādhā and another are considered to be the topmost. But when we compare these two, it is clear that Śrī Rādhā is most important. She alone is the personification of mahābhāva and all of Her qualities are superior in every way.

The pure form and spiritual body of Śrī Rādhā is simply a transformation/manifestation of prema. It is known throughout all the world's that She is the topmost and dear most of all of those associates who are dear to Kṛṣṇa.

“I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who resides in His own realm Goloka (the planet of the cows) with Śrī Rādhā, who resembles His own spiritual figure and who embodies the pleasure potency. Their companions are Her confidantes. They are all personifications of Her own bodily form and they are all fully absorbed in tasting the pleasures of extreme spiritual bliss.” (This is a quote from Śrī Brahmā-Saṁhitā 5.37)

The essence of all spiritual life is contained within the topmost, ecstatic, love-filled emotions (mahābhāva) of Śrī Rādhā. Her only business is to fulfill all of the desires of Kṛṣṇa.

The form and personality of Śrī Rādhā are like a magnificent jewel that is composed of mahābhāva. All of the other gopīs

who make up Her eternal associates are expansions of Her.
(C.C. Madhya 8.150-165)

Bhakti—True Knowledge Plus Spiritual Pleasure

These truths make up some of the highest teachings that Lord Caitanya came to share with us. Please study them and meditate upon them, for gaining an acceptance and understanding of them will allow you to also absorb the teachings we will share in the lessons ahead.

The next principle we wish to discuss are how these various energies of the Lord impact us, the jīvas.

The Vedas tell us that **it is through contact with the awareness potency of Kṛṣṇa that we attain knowledge of spiritual truths, and, it is by contacting the pleasure potency of the Lord that we taste spiritual pleasures.** For these reasons, bhakti itself has been explained as a combination of the awareness/knowledge and the pleasure potency of the Lord, for by putting ourselves into contact with the various bhakti practices we both gain knowledge of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and we begin to understand, and ultimately to experience drops of pleasure from Their ocean of mercy and love, and, although it may not be this pleasure which acts as our prime motivation, it is surely a wonderful reward that we receive for practicing ahaitukī-bhakti.

Ahaitukī-bhakti-Some Comments From Our Ācāryas

Now that we have shared so many details of ahaitukī-bhakti with you, we'll close out our explanation of this subject with some comments from our ācāryas, and in doing so, we will also be looking at a subject we will revisit in our next section—the goal of life.

In his commentary on the verse spoken by Lord Caitanya, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says this:

While praying in the mood of a devotee, Lord Caitanya says, “I do not pray to You for all these material things. My only prayer is that birth after birth I may have ahaitukī-bhakti unto you, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of my life.”

The endeavor to remove the miseries of material existence in the form of repeated birth and death is a matter beyond the ability of the living entities, for it depends exclusively upon the will of the Supreme Lord. One's liberation from all such miseries occurs automatically upon the cessation of the cycle of birth and death, which takes place by the will of the Lord.

Therefore, what is the need of praying for the removal of such miseries, when such a mentality is opposed to bhakti? Lord Caitanya thus prays: “Until the cycle of birth and death is terminated by the will of Bhagavān, let me have ahaitukī-bhakti unto His lotus feet birth after birth, regardless of my material circumstances—this is my only prayer.” (Śrī Sanmadana-bhāṣya)

Here he tells us **that seeking liberation from the miseries of this world is actually opposed to bhakti.** This is because such prayers are centered on and motivated by our own desires and concerns about our own personal welfare, whereas the moods of pure bhakti do not have room for such desires and concerns.

The great sadhu and intergalactic spaceman, Śrī Nārada Muni (Lesson 11) expresses these truths in this way:

Just as misery is obtained without any endeavor, as it arises from the effects of one's past actions (karma), material happiness is also acquired automatically due to the influence of our acts and the ever moving inconceivable nature of time. Therefore, intelligent persons should strive for that supreme state (ahaitukī-bhakti) which cannot be attained in the material dimension, even by wandering from the highest region there and down to the lowest position of material life. (S.B. 1.5.18)

As we expressed when we discussed karma and the book of our own lives, which we have written, the circumstances of life that lead to material happiness and distress come about automatically under the laws of karma. Therefore, to expend our energies on praying for a change in our life's story is not recommend here. Instead, we are to accept our circumstances as the mercy of the Lord while we go on endeavoring only to serve

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Him.

In this next quote, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has given us an expanded translation of Lord Caitanya's prayer.

O merciful Lord, this is my specific submission at your lotus feet. I do not ask for bodily happiness, material knowledge, wealth, followers, attainment of the heavenly planets, liberation from material existence, or any other such thing. I do not ask You for any kind of opulence or perfection. In whatever species I may take birth as a consequence of my good and evil deeds, may I continuously chant Your sweet names, and describe Your transcendental qualities. In every birth, may ahaitukī-bhakti remain awakened in my heart—this is my only prayer at Your lotus feet. Let whatever attraction I may have for material sense enjoyment be transformed into attraction and affection for You. I pray not only that this affection remains steady in all circumstances of happiness and distress, but that it continues to grow, day after day, by the influence of chanting Your Holy Names. Wherever I take birth, be it in the animal species, in the heavenly planets, or in hell, may pure devotion ever grace the heart of this servant, Bhaktivinoda. (Gītāvalī: Song 4)

Here, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has even mentioned that he is not averse to taking birth in the hellish planets. With this in mind, we can again point out that even our lengthy description of the hellish planets, that we shared in an earlier lesson, was simply a part of the “Don’t touch that!”, preliminary instructions of bhakti that are meant to be replaced by higher and purer prayers and motives as our understandings of the science of bhakti advance.

Bhakti and the Goal of Life

In Lesson 1, we told you that the goal of life is prema. Since then we’ve modified that simple basic truth to explain that it is more correct to say that our goal is prema-bhakti. Last month we shared a quote from Śrīla Gurudeva where he told us that **we must be clear about our goal in order to perform sādhanā, the practices that lead to the goal.** In that same lesson, we went into a great amount of detail about what this goal is and in the sections above we’ve again touched on this subject. So, you may be thinking, “What more is there to be said about the goal of life?”

Many times throughout this course we’ve also told you that we will not hesitate to repeat ourselves. We’ve also told you that the Vedas themselves are full of repetition, and we’ve tried to explain why there is great value in covering the same points time and time again. In our discussion on Kṛṣṇa’s instructions to Arjuna to “FIGHT!” we referred to multiple verses in the Bhagavad-Gītā where this same advice was given and we’ve shared quite a few quotes on other topics as well.

In keeping with this pattern, we are now going to share a string of quotes which Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us in one of his books. In doing so, we will demonstrate that repetitiveness is a valid system of teaching that has been used by our ācāryas. But this is not the main reason we are going to use these quotes.

In the material worlds, the health of our physical bodies is very important to most of us. So much so, that when we are confronted with an illness, we do not feel comfortable relying on the medical advice of just one person, even though our doctor may be well trained and fully qualified to diagnose what ails us. Not trusting the opinion, we receive, we feel the need to seek out a “second opinion.” And then, if for some reason we are still not satisfied with what we hear, either because we doubt that it is correct or simply because we do not want to face the facts of whatever diagnoses we have received, we may seek a third opinion, a fourth opinion, and so on, until finally, when we find that all the “experts” agree, we are able to give up all our doubts and accept the truths of what we are being told.

If we are willing to go through such a rigorous process when it comes to caring for our temporary material bodies, bodies which all experts will tell us are bound to “die” anyway, no matter how much care, time, or expense we put into them, then it only makes

sense that we would also want to seek out a “second opinion” and more on how we are to care for the eternal aspect of who we really are, the soul.

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When we are faced with a medical diagnosis that we do not like, we may even seek out the advice of those who are in no way qualified to understand or treat our condition. Not wanting to accept the fact that we need to change our habits or undergo painful or costly procedures, we may try to find various forms of “alternative medicine” that offer an easier or a cheaper cure.

In the case of searching for the true ailments of our soul, we may also follow a similar path. When a real, valid practitioner of the highly advanced science of bhakti yoga tells us that we must give up things that we are attached to, like meat eating and intoxicants, and habits that we truly believe we enjoy, such as watching TV or reading books about material pleasures, we are likely to feel that there must be an easier, better, or less restrictive way to heal those troubles that truly burden us. Being told that we must chant the Lord’s Holy Names or hear/read about His qualities, associates, and pastimes may seem like a bitter pill to swallow, when in reality, it is the sweetest medicine that exists.

Not wanting to follow the only path that leads to the only goal that is worthy of our efforts, we may seek out a second opinion, and, just as in the world of material medicines, there are always unregulated, uncertified, self-taught charlatans who are more than willing to provide us with false hopes pinned on easy cures. Preaching from their pulpits that are built upon misleading misinformation, these dispensers of so-called knowledge try to convince us that things like the pleasures of the heavenly planets or the non-existence of “merging with the supreme consciousness” will relieve us of all our worldly troubles.

Knowing this, we have decided to include this section, not as a repeat performance, but instead to provide you with multiple opinions, from topmost authorities, on what the goal of our life is. In doing so, we hope to both reinforce the reality of what this goal is, and we hope to help you accept this goal for your own life as well, for until we **fully** accept both what our goal is and the fact that we must carefully and enthusiastically follow the path that leads to the goal, our course will be filled with obstacles and our mind, which we will rely on to keep us on that path, will constantly waiver and flicker as it questions its own decisions and contemplates turning down the dead end roads that lead us away from the path.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, and all of our ācāryas have very good reasons for providing us with second, third, and fourth opinions, but if we really want to begin to make rapid progress on our journey to prema, we must come to the firm conclusion that **the types of statements that we are about to share** are not opinions at all, for what they **represent** are **the facts of life.**

In his book, “The Nectar of Devotion,” Śrīla Prabhupāda shares the following quotes with us. In the first two of these quotes, the Lord Himself, in His form as Lord Kapiladeva is instructing His own mother on spiritual truths, and in the following two, in His original form as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He shares similar truths with His uncle, Uddhava. When we seek advice, we are wise to consult someone who is extremely wise and knowledgeable in his field, and thus we start these quotes with the statements of the supreme authority, which surely qualifies them as facts, rather than opinions.

Lord Kapiladeva taught His mother (and us) this:

My dear mother, My pure devotees are charmed by seeing My different forms, the beauty of My face, and the structure of My body, which are all so enchanting. My laughing, My pastimes, and My glance appear so beautiful to them that their minds are always absorbed in thoughts of Me, and their lives are fully dedicated to Me. Although such people do not desire any kind of liberation or material happiness, still, I give them a place amongst My associates in the supreme abode. (S.B. 3.25.23)

In this quote, the Lord also reveals that our minds and thoughts

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are to be absorbed in Him—in His laugh, His pastimes, and so on—and not in either His impersonal form or in some other object such as our breathing or any indefinite ideal such as “the space between our thoughts.” We are not simply to “let thoughts come and go from the mind.” **We are to control the mind by intentionally determining what it focuses on**, and the highest devotees choose only Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Their pastimes to be the object of their thoughts.

Lord Kapiladeva also teaches His mother (and us) this:

My dear Mother, devotees whose hearts are always filled with the service of My lotus feet, and who are prepared to do anything for My satisfaction, especially those who assemble together to understand My qualities, pastimes, and forms, and thus glorify Me congregationally and derive pleasure therefrom, such fortunate devotees never desire to become one with Me. And not to speak of becoming one with me, even if they are offered a post like Mine, in My abode, or opulence like Mine, or even personal association with Me with similar bodily features, they refuse to accept these because they are satisfied simply by being engaged in My service. (S.B. 3.25.31)

In introducing this next quote, we wish to tell you that for general people, for non-devotees, the Vedas specifically mention four goals of life. These are of course not the proper or topmost goal, and yet, in some places, their limited value is praised. This is done only to encourage those who are unfortunate enough to be attracted to them to diligently pursue the paths that lead to these goals, for in doing so, they will at least lead somewhat regulated lives and develop faith in a higher authority. Also, since these paths contain many basic truths, such as the reincarnation of the soul into different bodies and the reality of reward and punishments in future lives due to our current choices and activities, some advancement in and understanding of spiritual truths is included in these paths as well.

These four lesser goals of life are:

- 1) **Dharma**, which in this case refers to leading a life where one perfectly follows the rules, and fulfills all of the duties that are assigned to him based upon his social position and religious status in life. **This goal is also known as religiousness.**
- 2) **Artha**, which refers to obtaining material wealth and making material advances in fields that increase one's ability to secure this wealth. **This goal is also known as economic development.**
- 3) **Kāma**, this refers to leading one's life solely for the purpose securing pleasures for the material senses, either in this life or the next. **This goal is also known as sense gratification.**
- 4) **Mokṣa/mukti** refers to liberation from the cycle of birth and death and/or liberation from the influence of the gunas. Those who are highly advanced on the bhakti path can attain this second type of mukti even in this life, and when this takes place, all sense of possession that arise from notions of “I” and “mine” also disappear, leaving only a concept of “I am the Lord's eternal servant,” and, of an even higher state, a sense of “I am His friend, protector, or beloved” or “He is mine.” **This goal is usually referred to as liberation.** It is this same concept, when misunderstood, that leads to a belief that the goal of mukti is either to merge with the Lord through the elimination of all variagatedness or to terminate one's existence through the elimination of all cravings or material desires.

Depending on one's personal beliefs, these goals can be pursued either with or without a religious element. The first goal, a dutiful life, can even be pursued by a moralist who has no faith in God, and yet believes there is merit in living life by high standards. The second and third goals, wealth and sense gratification are often pursued by those who have totally abandoned even such things as morals, and the fourth goal, liberation, is even pursued by some who completely deny the

existence of both God and an afterlife.

However, in Vedic society, these various goals generally include the worship of various demigods, with the basics of this system discussed by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in this way:

Persons possessing faith in the Vedas and who desire to attain success in routine religiosity (dharma) worship Sūrya, the sun-god. Those who desire wealth (artha) worship Gaṇeśa. (The elephant-headed deity who is the son of Lord Śiva.) Those who desire varieties of sensual enjoyment worship the goddess Durgā. (This is Lord Śiva's wife, who is also a personification of māyā.) Those who desire liberation (mukti/mokṣa) worship Lord Śiva, and the impure devotees worship Lord Viṣṇu through sakāma-bhakti, bhakti mixed with material desires. All of these types of worship are carried out by those who have material desires. (The liberation sought by the worshippers of Lord Śiva is stilled considered material because it involves some desire for personal benefit.) On the other hand, worship of the Lord's impersonal aspect, Brahma, is carried out by those who have reached the stage where they are free from material desires (niṣkāma), and who are free from attachment to the results of their activities. Pure worship of Lord Viṣṇu can only be performed by one who is free from personal motivation. (Vivṛti to Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka, verse 4)

We proceeded this next teaching with this explanation of the other undesirable goals of life because they are mentioned in this next quote, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches His uncle (and us) this:

My dear Uddhava, a person whose consciousness is fully absorbed in thoughts of Me and My activities does not even aspire to occupy the post of the creator of the material universe, Lord Brahmā; nor the post of the chief of the demigods, Indra; nor does he desire lordship over the planets; nor the eight kinds of mystic perfections; nor religiosity, wealth, or sense gratification; nor does he even desire liberation itself. (S.B. 11.14.13)

Lord Kṛṣṇa also confirms this truth to His uncle when He says:

My dear Uddhava, those devotees who have completely taken shelter of My service are so steadfast in their bhakti that they have no other desire. Even if they are offered the four kinds of spiritual opulence's, they will refuse to accept them. So what to speak of their desiring anything within this material world! (S.B. 11.20.34)

Along with the authority of the Lord Himself, Śrīla Prabhupāda has shared the statements of many of His most advanced devotees, such as Kṛṣṇa's uncle Uddhava. In these quotes, we also find that the position of the devotee is so exalted that there is no need to seek any other goal. Uddhava addresses Lord Kṛṣṇa and says:

My dear Lord, for persons who are engaged in bhakti, there is nothing worth attaining from religiousness (dharma), economic development (artha), sense gratification (kāma), or liberation (mukti), even though the types of happiness that these processes provide can very easily be had by them. In spite of the chance to enjoy such things, my dear Lord, I do not desire to attain any such results. My only prayer is that I may have unflinching faith and devotion to Your lotus feet. (S.B. 3.15)

In another passage Mahārāja Pṛthu, who was a powerful king and an advanced devotee of the Lord, prays in this way:

My dear Lord, if, after taking liberation, I have no chance of hearing Your glories which are chanted by pure devotees from the core of their hearts as they praise Your lotus feet, if I am to be denied to opportunity to taste the honey of spiritual bliss that flows from these descriptions of You, then I shall never ask for this so-called liberation. I shall simply always pray unto

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

Your Lordship that You may give me millions of tongues and millions of ears so I can constantly chant and hear of Your transcendental glories. (S.B. 4.20.21)

These types of prayers are the only types of prayers that flow from the mouths of pure devotees, even when those devotees appear in unique or hard to recognize forms. This is seen in the case of **Vṛtāsura**, who, although he appeared to be a demon, prayed in this way:

My dear Lord, although by leaving Your service, I may be promoted to exalted material planets or gain lordship over entire planetary systems, I do not aspire to do this. Nor do I wish to attain the mystic perfections attained through the eight fold (aṣṭāṅga) yoga path. Nor do I desire to be delivered from these material worlds or to merge into Your existence. All I wish for, my Lord, is to be able to associate with You as Your eternal servant. (S.B. 11.23)

The chief of the demigods is also aware of the unequalled value of bhakti, for **Indra** tells his mother:

My dear mother, persons who have given up all other desires and who are simply engaged in bhakti know what is actually in their best interest. Such persons are the only ones who are actually serving their own best interests and only these devotees of the Lord are considered to be first-class experts in the matter of advancing toward the perfectional stage of life. (S.B. 6.18.52)

The four goals of life that are unwanted and rejected by devotees are also discussed in the **Hayaśīrṣa Purāṇa**, which states:

My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of God, I do not want any of the benedictions one attains from leading a religious life (dharma), nor do I want economic development (artha), nor sense gratification (kāma), nor liberation (mukti). I simply pray to be an eternal servant at Your lotus feet. Kindly oblige me and give me this benediction.

And in another prayer that is recorded in this same book, one of the greatest devotees of all time, who just happened to be a monkey named **Hanumān**, put his plea to the Lord in this way:

My dear Lord, if You like, You can give me salvation from material existence, or the chance to merge into Your existence, but I do not want any of these things. I do not want anything that diminishes my relationship with You as master and servant. (Hayaśīrṣa Purāṇa)

So the experts agree. We have clearly demonstrated the fact that **only bhakti**, and then, only ahaitukī-bhakti is the goal of life, and yet, there is still more to tell. This is why, in next month's lesson, we will dive even deeper into this topic of the goal of life, and, in doing so, we will finally begin to fully explain the singular and unmatched role that both Śrī Rādhā and our specific chain of gurus plays in both attaining the purest of all forms of bhakti and in achieving the goal of life itself.

We pray that you maintain your interest in these truths, even as we repeat certain aspects of them and slowly reveal others, for in the end, we will tell you much, much more than just, "Don't touch that!" By the end of this course, we hope to have given you at least the basic understandings of everything you will need to continue and one day complete your journey to prema.

For now, all we ask is that you seriously read, reread, study, and meditate upon the truths in these lessons, and that you enthusiastically engage in the other processes we've introduced you to as well, such as chanting the Holy Names and worshipping both Śrī guru and the Deities we have sent you. We also of course pray that as you perform these aspects of bhakti-yoga you will only seek the opportunity to engage in more service in turn for your efforts, for by purifying our desires in this way we can begin to truly act in our own best

interests.

The Path to Ahaitukī-bhakti

After having spent so much time in this lesson, and last months as well, on the topic of what pure bhakti is, it may come as a bit of a surprise when we tell you that very few of us are prepared or qualified to engage in this service.

This fact is verified by the Lord Himself, for during His instruction to Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, **Lord Caitanya** teaches us this:

In comparison to the total number of living entities, those who are situated in a human body is very small. That division becomes even smaller when they are further divided, leaving out those lowest among men who are totally uncivilized and are barely considered humans at all, such as those who follow no religious regulations at all, those who kill to satisfy the tongue, and those who follow atheistic belief systems.

Among human being, only those who lead regulated religious lives are considered civilized. Among these, almost half are hypocrites who simply claim to be followers of religion, while in fact, they are busy committing all kinds of sinful acts in direct defiance of religious principles.

Among the followers of the highest religious principles as given in the Vedas, most of them only follow the sections that deal with kāmā-karma (committing acts that are designed to gain rewards for the satisfaction of the senses). Out of those who follow such principles, there may be one who is actually wise.

Out of these wise men, one may actually become free from the influence of the gunas (the binding ropes of māyā's illusions), and out of these liberated persons a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa is very difficult to find.

Then, to support these truths, the Lord uses this quote from the Vedas:

O great sage, out of the millions of people who are free from the gunas, and out of all those who have nearly attained perfection, there is hardly one pure devotee of the Supreme Lord. Only such a devotee is actually completely satisfied and peaceful. (S.B. 6.34.5)

Of course reaching this stage is our goal, and all of our prayers, practices, and meditations should be aimed toward attaining pure devotion, but in light of the fact that this stage is rare, the Lord has given us explicit instructions on how we can engage in activities that, although not on the level of pure bhakti, will lead us toward that goal.

Even in the Bhagavad-Gītā, we find that Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not instruct Arjuna to give up his duties in favor of strictly performing bhakti until the last few verses of the final chapter.

Angels of Vision

In translating the Gītā, our ācāryas have given various interpretations of some verses, and, in doing so, they have also given various commentaries which focus on different aspects of what the Lord's teachings are. All of their translations and commentaries are correct, they are just giving us different visions of the same truth.

In previous lessons, we have discussed how a diamond is seen in different colors from different angles. A person who is seeing a blue reflection from it is no more wrong, nor right, than a person who is seeing a red reflection. This example does a good job of describing how the truths of the Vedas can be properly seen, translated, and commented upon in ways, that seem different, but are correct nonetheless.

We have shared this truth with you because we are fully aware of the fact that some of you may have Gītās that are translated by different ācāryas. Some may even have versions that are not translated by Vaiṣṇavas at all. Of course, if you have such a translation, the Gītā itself tells you that the translator/commentator cannot understand the Lord, and thus we recommend you to abandon it.

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

Staple

If you have a Gītā by an ācārya such as Śrī Bhaktivedānta Swami (Śrīla Prabhupāda), you may find that the quotes we are about to share differ from those found in his work, and that there are subtle differences in their interpretation as well, and this is why we've taken the time to discuss this subject with you now.

What we ask you to do is to simply try to absorb these truths without making an effort to compare them to what you've read elsewhere. We are simply presenting one angle of vision (the diamond is red), and we are not claiming that another angle is incorrect.

In fact, viewing these truths from various angles in order to increase our understanding of them is recommended by Prabhupāda himself.

I am very much stressing this point, that all of my students shall be very much conversant with the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and that they should read our books very diligently at least one or two hours daily and try to understand the subject matter from varieties of angles. We should discuss subject matter very minutely and inspect it from all angles of approach and savor new understandings. (Letter of 16 June 1972)

We ask you to follow this instruction as we discuss the path that leads to ahaitukī-bhakti.

Do Your Duty While Thinking of Me

Let's start our discussion with a quote from the Gītā where Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna:

Whatever one remembers at the time of giving up the material body, one is sure to attain that state again, due to being always absorbed in such contemplation. Therefore, you should always remember Me, and fight with you mind and intellect devoted to Me, for in this way you will attain Me without a doubt. (B.G. 8.6-7)

As we discussed in Lesson 16, in telling Arjuna to fight, Kṛṣṇa is instructing us all to do our duties, whatever they may be. But more importantly, in these verses, His focus is on an instructing us to remember Him while we do so, and this practice forms the basis of the path that leads to pure/ahaitukī-bhakti.

The second reason these verses are relevant to our discussion is that Kṛṣṇa is not telling Arjuna to give up his duty and perform ahaitukī-bhakti.

The second quote we will examine in this regard, and the commentary on it by our ācāryas, further emphasis that there is a path that can be followed which, although not pure bhakti, can be very beneficial nonetheless.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna this:

O Arjuna, whatever activities you perform, whatever you eat, whatever religious ceremonies you conduct, whatever you give in charity, and whatever austerities you perform, offer them all to Me. (B.G. 9.27)

If we did not have the expert guidance of both Lord Caitanya and our ācāryas, we might not be able to draw the full and complete meanings out of verses like this. Taken out of the context in which it was spoken, as though it were a separate teaching, one might think this verse is describing pure bhakti, for it involves offering everything we do to the Lord, but this is not the case. The reasons why this is so, and the truth of what is being described will now be presented to you.

The first point we want to share relates to the fact that we cannot and should not believe that we can offer everything to Kṛṣṇa. This is explained by Śrīla Gurudeva in his commentary to this verse.

When Kṛṣṇa says, "Whatever actions you perform, be they material or related to Vedic religious ceremonies, offer them to Me," A person should not wrongly think that he can perform any activity and eat and drink whatever he likes as long as he offers it to Kṛṣṇa, and that there will be no defect. His actions

will not necessarily be successful simply because, out of obligation, he offers them to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa ... All commentators on this verse have explained the deep meaning: one should act in such a way that all of one's activities are offered directly to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In other words, only those actions that are performed for His pleasure should be offered. In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.5.36), Nārada Muni also says, "The surrendered devotee only performs those acts for Bhagavān that are pleasing to Him."

This is why we can never offer such things as meat to the either the Supreme Lord or His direct representative Śrī guru.

The next point we will share brings our focus to the subject we most wanted to make you aware of, that although this instruction—to offer (most) everything to Kṛṣṇa—is not pure bhakti, still, it is a process that is recommended and which can be followed by those who are not ready to walk the pure path.

Śrīla Gurudeva explains this truth in this way.

Here, Kṛṣṇa speaks to His dear friend Arjuna, whom He is using as an instrument to teach humanity. His instruction is meant for those who are unable to take shelter of the most superior pure bhakti as He has described it [earlier in the Gītā], and also for those who do not have a taste for performing an even lower class of bhakti, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is advising them to adopt those actions (karma) and cultivate that knowledge (jñāna) that is selflessly performed and predominated by bhakti (niškāma-karma/ jñāna-miśrā-pradhāni-bhūtā-bhakti).

In his commentary on this verse, Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī specifies that lower class bhakti refers to "the inferior and selfish acts of devotion performed with material intention (sakāma-bhakti)." This refers to those who offer things to the Lord with hopes and prayers that He will provide things that give pleasure to their senses.

In addition to these statements, Lord Caitanya Himself has confirmed that this verse does not represent pure bhakti. In His conversation with Rāya Rāmananda, He asks this great devotee to tell him about the goal of life and the path to reach that goal (sādhana).

In doing so, Rāya Rāmananda mentions this verse from the Gītā (9.27), but Lord Caitanya rejects it, telling him that it is superficial. (C.C. Madhya 8.60-61).

In their commentaries on this verse, our ācāryas explain why Lord Caitanya rejected this verse as being the proper path. They tell us that offerings of this nature are not inherently pleasing to Kṛṣṇa. This does not mean He is not pleased at all, it only means that they are not as pleasing as performing such aspects of bhakti a hearing, speaking about and remembering His glories, chanting His names, or serving Śrī guru.

Since these acts are based on the false ego, they also are not considered pure bhakti. If one thinks "I" have done something to earn something that is now "mine", and now "I" will offer it to Kṛṣṇa, this mentality creates an impurity in the offering.

There is however a great deal of benefit that can arise from these activities. In his commentary on this verse Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura explains this truth.

The activities of a devotee are performed with body, mind, speech, intelligence, heart, and all the senses, but they should not be compared to the acts of those whose religious practices are performed in order to enjoy their results. As a result of offering one's activities to Kṛṣṇa as described in this verse, one's aversion to Him is gradually removed. Jīvas who are situated in their eternal constitutional position perform all their actions only for the purpose of serving Kṛṣṇa. If some pious person who is working to fulfill his own desires, and who is blessed with spiritual good fortune, begins to follow the ideals of devotees in a bonafide Vaiṣṇava lineage, and they offer all their activities unto the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they quickly rise above karma-miśrā-bhakti (bhakti mixed

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

with the acts done for their own benefit) and they become counted among the devotees (bhaktas).

Here the great benefits of these acts are given. The first one mentioned—the gradual removal of our aversion to the Lord—is an exceptionally fantastic benefit, for this aversion forms the entire basis for our entrapment in the world of māyā. It was our decision to turn away from Him that began our material troubles, and as long as we remain averse to Him, we will remain in this prison house. On the other hand, as we turn our heart toward Him, giving up our aversion to the fact that our only position is that of being His servant, the ropes of the gunas begin to weaken and fray, until we finally break free from them completely.

The second benefit is twofold, rising above the state where we act only for our own benefit, and becoming counted as a devotee ourselves.

Sandwiched in between the two **bold** descriptions of benefits given above, is the description of the key difference between acts of devotees and all others who worship or make offerings to the Lord. This difference comes down to a term we've focused on before—motive. **Devotees act only to serve the Lord, the rest act with at least some desire to gain some personal material benefits.**

And, at the beginning of the second **bold** section, we find a description of what causes us to begin to give up our aversion to Kṛṣṇa, to rise above working for our own benefit, and to become devotees ourselves—associating with Vaiṣṇavas. We've tried to express the importance of this aspect of the bhakti path in the past, but since, **in the case of spiritual truths, there's no such thing as too much of a good thing**, we're going to revisit the topic of association, both the good and the bad, again in next month's lesson.

There is yet another aspect of how we can dovetail our activities toward bhakti. Our ācāryas tell us that **while most may perform some act, and then offer the results to the Lord, devotees even offer the action itself, and this is done even before beginning the action itself. In other words, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is never an afterthought, instead, He is the prime incentive itself.**

Even devotees must perform some acts that are not among the activities of pure devotion. They too must cleanse and maintain the body and so on. Knowing this, our ācāryas have instructed us in regards to how we are to carry out those actions. Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us:

We must perform so many worldly duties, but if, following the loving moods (bhāvas) of our guru, we meditate on Bhagavān while carrying them out, they will all become nectar.

The importance of this truth, meditating on Kṛṣṇa while performing our worldly duties, was mentioned earlier when we quoted Kṛṣṇa's advice to Arjuna to remember Him while he fought, and we will focus on it again, and emphasize its importance later in this lesson as well.

The next comment and quote we will share are also of great importance, and they will lead us directly into the next set of quotes we want to share with you. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī teaches us:

Devotees perform all their activities, whether mundane, Vedic, or related to the body, with the feeling that "Bhagavān is my master, and it is for His pleasure that I am offering everything to His feet."

This teaching is confirmed in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, where it states:

In accordance with the particular characteristics acquired due to the activities and experiences of his material lives, whatever one does with his body, words, mind, senses, intelligence or purified consciousness, should be offered to the Lord, thinking "This is for the pleasure of Bhagavān."

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

(S.B. 11.2.36)

This mindset, of offering all one's activities to the Lord, for His pleasure, will be dealt with again in the last section of this lesson.

In summary, in verse 9.27 of the Gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has instructed us all to offer EVERYTHING to Him. In their commentaries on this verse, our ācāryas have clarified and deepened its meaning by telling us that we should only offer things that please Him, and never offer unacceptable things such as the flesh of dead animals.

They also teach us that this verse does not describe pure bhakti, which is confirmed by the fact that Lord Caitanya rejected it as the path and the goal of life.

Next we told you how they have shown us that, although not pure bhakti, these offerings lead to great spiritual benefits, and finally, we shared the truths that devotees offer all their activities, even those related to the body and so on, to the Lord with a desire to please Him.

As always, we ask you to seek the guidance of Śrī guru as you reread, study, and meditate on these truths with a desire to bring them into your heart.

In the Beginning...

The first jīva that exists in any material universe is Lord Brahmā. We've told you about the book which Lord Caitanya wanted all His disciples to read, Śrīla Brahmā-Samhitā. In this book, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives Lord Brahmā a mantra to meditate on. This leads to the awakening of a vast array of spiritual truths, which Lord Brahmā then sings as a prayer of glorification of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. After this prayer, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives Lord Brahmā the basics of both pure bhakti-yoga and the path that leads one to that level, and, amazingly enough, He does this in just five verses. We are now going to share both those verses, and the comments on them made by one of our ācāryas with you.

The text which introduces these verses says:

On hearing the hymns of Lord Brahmā, which contained the essence of the truth, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa said, "Brahmā, if now, being endowed with real knowledge of My glories, you experience the inclination to create offspring, then listen attentively to the science that is set forth in the following five verses." (Śrī Brahmā-Samhitā Text 57)

All of the commentaries we will share on these verses are by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and in expanding on this introductory verse he sums up the truths that will follow in this way:

Pure unalloyed bhakti can be practiced by souls engaged in worldly occupations by combining the same with the desire for carrying out the will of the Lord.

What is critical here? Motive. If we act only with a desire to carry out the Lord's wishes, our every act can become a part of our bhakti practices.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa now begins His instructions to Lord Brahmā.

All of the symptoms of prema are awakened by performing that topmost bhakti that is beyond the influence of the gunas. All of the qualities of the pure soul, such as its own awareness and pure bliss, arise through the cultivation of spiritual knowledge and the performance of the various bhakti practices. (Śrī Brahmā-Samhitā Text 58)

In his comments, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura tells us:

Real knowledge is nothing but knowledge of one's relationship to Kṛṣṇa.

In his great work, "Jaiva Dharma", Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has broken down the teachings of Lord Caitanya into ten basic or "root" truths. In next month's lesson, we plan to go over those truths with you, and when we do so you will find that seven of these ten truths deal with what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has declared to be real knowledge, that is knowledge of our relationship with Kṛṣṇa,

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which is also expanded to include knowledge of our relationship with His external energy, māyā, and the relationship between māyā and Him as well.

We began explaining those truths early on in this course, and we'll continue to do so, for Śrīla Bhaktivinoḍa Ṭhākura has taught us that,

“One who does not have knowledge of the truths of these relationships (sambandha-jñāna) cannot become a pure Vaiṣṇava by any means.”

The fact that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has told Lord Brahmā (and us) that cultivation of knowledge is a practice that we must engage in if we wish to awaken our prema is important for many reasons, let us share two of them with you.

First, in the list of quotes that we shared earlier on the goal of life, most all of them focused on serving the Lord. Since He has given us this direct instruction to cultivate knowledge, by doing so, we follow His directions, and in doing so, we serve Him as well. Therefore, we should be very enthusiastic to study these teachings and acquire all of these truths.

Second, we should realize that the case of Lord Brahmā is very rare. Simply by meditation on a mantra that was given to him by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he was able to realize so many truths, including sambandha-jñāna, but for the rest of us reading, rereading, and studying these truths, under the mercy and guidance of Śrī guru is a necessary part of our practices. Therefore, although we may hear such truths as, **“All perfections can be attained simply by chanting the Holy Names,”** this refers to very pure levels of chanting that few are capable of. This is why for most all of us, **we must both cultivate this knowledge and engage in our other bhakti practices as well.** (Hearing about the Lord, remembering Him, doing Deity worship, and so on.)

In this verse, this topmost bhakti is referred to by the same term we shared in last month's lesson, uttamā-bhakti, bhakti that is beyond the influence of the guṇas. Knowing this, you should appreciate even more why Śrīla Gurudeva insists that we learn the meaning of pure bhakti, for, as Kṛṣṇa tells us here, it is its performance that leads to the awakening of the prema in our hearts.

In the next verse, as if to clarify what knowledge is to be cultivated and what activities are to be performed, Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches us this:

This topmost bhakti (uttamā) can certainly be attained by one who uses his own intelligence to constantly remember Me by means of following the behaviors of the ācāryas and studying the evidence contained in the scriptures. (Śrī Brahmā-Saṁhitā Text 59)

In an earlier lesson we spoke of evidence, telling you that the absolute truth only comes from the scriptures, and they are the only evidence we can trust. In this verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa also gives us the number one rule of bhakti, to constantly remember Him, and He tells us that our single guide for how to behave is found in the example of the sādhus, which is exactly why they are called ācāryas, teachers by example. By studying this evidence, following in the footsteps of the ācāryas, and always remembering Kṛṣṇa we can elevate ourselves to the topmost level of bhakti. **Lord Kṛṣṇa** then states:

One should definitely perform this type of bhakti for it always results in leading one to Me. Upon attaining this goal one attains both the greatest possible happiness and the highest level of good fortune that can ever be attained. (Śrī Brahmā-Saṁhitā Text 60)

Here, Kṛṣṇa assures us of the unmatched rewards that one automatically receives upon attaining His direct service. In this way, He is also letting us know that even though we do not seek anything for ourselves by engaging in our service to Him, He will lovingly bestow unmatched gifts upon us.

The next instructions that Kṛṣṇa shares, tells us, in an

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extremely concise way, about the path that leads to ahaitukī-bhakti. In the first half of this verse, He stresses the importance of faith and gives the same instruction that He gave to Arjuna in the final verses of the Bhagavad-Gītā — **abandon all other duties and serve Him** (B.G. 18.66)

Since this verse is so full of meanings, we will share this first half with you, discuss it a bit, and then share the second half.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches us:

The results one attains from his activities will always directly correspond to the nature of one's faith. Therefore, if one seeks to awaken his prema, he must abandon all his other duties (dharma) and devote himself exclusively to serving Me, with full faith that, by doing so, all his other obligations in life will be fulfilled. (Śrī Brahmā-Saṁhitā Text 61)

In his commentary on this verse, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura tells us that the duties (dharma) referred to in this verse include all of the practices that are not included in pure bhakti, such as working to attain material desires (kāmya-karma), and trying to “merge” with the Lord.

Of course, beyond these types of dharma, or duties, there are other dharma as well. These duties relate to the activities of the mind, the body, and society. Since most of these must also be performed, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura puts forth a question that may arise in connection with the instruction to give up all dharma.

How will the preservation and conduct of worldly affairs be feasible if one is continuously engaged in the realization of bhakti?

He also asks: How could one practice bhakti when society and the body break, down due to their neglect, in favor of strictly performing bhakti?

In answering his own question, which he posed solely for our benefit, he lists what is being referred to as the duties/activities to the body and society. He tells us that eating, walking, resting, sleeping, cleansing and covering the body, etc., are the activities of the body. Thinking, remembering, contemplating, becoming aware of objects and truths, and noticing pleasure and pain are the activities of the mind. While marrying; interacting with the government; practicing brotherhood; attending ceremonies; doing worship; constructing roads, digging wells, and other public projects; maintaining relationships with others; observing proper conduct; and showing hospitality and due respect to others and the duties related to society.

How we are to carry out all of these functions, while also engaging in bhakti, is explained in the second half of this verse and in the commentary that follows.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa instructs us:

The people of this world are constantly performing activities as they pursue their own various goals. By using their activities as a means of meditating on Me, they can attain the topmost (parām) level of bhakti. (Śrī Brahmā-Saṁhitā Text 61)

In giving us a paraphrasing of what Kṛṣṇa has taught us, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes:

This world subsists by the constant performance of certain activities. Fill all these activities with meditation on Me. This will destroy the quality that makes those activities appear as acts done by you. Then they will be of the nature of My service (bhakti).

When we perform the activities/duties that we listed earlier, those related to the body, the mind, and society with desires for personal gain, we simply create more karma and strengthen the ropes that bind us to this world. but Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura tells us:

When we manage to perform these activities in a way that

is conducive for attainment of bhakti: they are called subsidiary devotional practices.

By this, he is referring to the same types of bhakti that Kṛṣṇa instructed Arjuna to perform, bhakti that is mixed with karma and proper knowledge (jñāna) but where bhakti is predominant. (B.G. 9.27)

So how will we move forward on our journey to prema while still engaged in these subsidiary practices? Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura tells us:

When bhakti proper (hearing, chanting, remembering, etc.) is practiced in due time, while one performs the subsidiary devotional practices in one's intercourse with the ungodly people of this world, and when one meditates on Me while performing these acts, one does not become apathetic to God even while performing these worldly activities. This constitutes the practice of looking inwards, turning towards one's real self.

In support of this position, and in order to further help us understand the mindset that we need to adopt as we act in this world, he then refers us to two verses from the Vedas.

Everything that exists is controlled and owned by the Lord. Therefore, one should only accept what is necessary for his own maintenance. One should not be attached to anything, for he should know who all things belong to.

If one maintains this mentality, he will not be bound by the laws of karma, even if he goes on working for hundreds of years. There is no alternative to this way for man. (Śrī Iśopaniṣad verses 1,2)

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura tells us that, from the bhakti point of view, these verses mean that we can attain Kṛṣṇa's favor by means of realizing that **everything we receive is drawn directly from the Lord's account. If we take more than our share, we are stealing from Him.**

In his next instructions, he tells us how we incorporate these truths into our thoughts in order to allow ourselves to still make progress toward our goal, even while we perform other duties, and, in doing so, he tells us that, if we maintain the proper motive, even these acts can come within the practice of arcana, the worship of the Lord. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura teaches us:

You should do your duties of the world by the method of worshipping God thereby. If your duties are practiced along with the simultaneous meditation of obeying the command of the Supreme Lord, then it will be a subsidiary spiritual function being helpful for the growth of the tendency toward bhakti. This is because, by working in these ways, and with these understandings, one is, in truth, always seeking the protection of God.

Next, he tells us that for one such as Lord Brahmā, who was not yet situated in a state of bhāva, where one serves the Lord entirely due to motives which are driven by the emotions/love of the heart, such instructions are entirely appropriate. Whereas, for one who is at this advanced level, it would be wrong to encourage them to engage in worldly duties.

Knowing that this chain of instructions can be a bit difficult to understand, we will now try to summarize them all for you, before we share Śrī Kṛṣṇa's last teaching to Lord Brahmā.

The characteristics of prema are awakened by the performance of that topmost level of bhakti which is beyond the influence of the gunas (uttamā-bhakti). These symptoms, which permanently lie within the soul, arise when we use the intelligence to constantly remember the Lord, and this is done through the cultivation of spiritual knowledge and by engaging in the various bhakti practices.

This knowledge should only be that which is also beyond the influence of the gunas, for only such knowledge, which is located entirely in the spiritual dimension, can reach and have influence on the spiritual bliss of the soul, which is

also located there. This knowledge is only found in the evidence of the scriptures, which includes the words of our ācāryas.

The bhakti practices we perform to awaken this prema must also be located in this dimension, and these practices can be carried out by following the example of our ācāryas, for they too are completely beyond the influence of the gunas.

If we perform this topmost bhakti, Kṛṣṇa will reward us with the highest good fortune and the greatest possible bliss, even though our service to Him was not in any way driven by a desire for our own personal rewards.

We are to abandon all other duties and serve Him with complete faith that, by this alone, all our other obligations are fulfilled, but, since most of us are not yet at the level of faith, we can still make advancement toward prema by meditating on Him in the performance of our worldly duties.

This is done by understanding that everything is controlled and owned by Him. Therefore, if we accept only those things we need to maintain ourselves, and, in doing so, we remain constantly aware of the fact that we did not "do" anything to "earn" these things, that in fact, everything we possess is simply loaned to us by the Lord, and we see all of this as a product of His mercy, we can avoid the laws of karma that otherwise control those who work in order to own and possess things for their own enjoyment.

In addition, all of our acts are to be carried out as a means of worshipping the Lord and with the intent of carrying out His commands as well. For example, He tells us to maintain the health of the body He has loaned to us. If, as we prepare proper foods, consume them, or exercise the body, we always remain aware that we are doing so due to His command, and we carry out His command as a means of worshipping Him, then our activities, instead of creating karma (reactions) that will bind us to this world, they will instead lead us upward toward the purer levels of bhakti, where our prema will be awakened.

In next month's lesson, our inmate contributor will share his thoughts on how their instructions can be realistically applied, even in a prison setting.

As we near the close of this long and truth filled lesson, let us share the final instruction to Lord Brahmā with you. Śrī Kṛṣṇa taught him:

O Brahmā! After considering all of these truths, you should use the capabilities that I have given you to intelligently conduct your duties in this world. While doing so, you should remain constantly aware of the fact that everything in this world is generated from Me and by Me. The animating energy of spirit, the ingredients of matter, the material dimension itself, the fiery energy which I have given you so that you may perform the job of creating the material worlds, and even the seed of all these things, all spring from Me. (Śrī Brahmā-Saṁhitā Text 62)

The essence of these same truths is also contained in the verse we shared earlier that stated that everything is controlled and owned by the Lord. We must remain aware of these facts at all times, for by doing so, we will be able to avoid the dangers and obstacles that arise on the bhakti path when we become attached to things that do not belong to us.

By working in this spirit, by offering both our actions and their results as an offering in worship of the Lord, and by humbly accepting only those things that are needed to maintain ourselves, we practice the type of bhakti that leads to the topmost bhakti, which then, in turn, allows us to complete our own journey to prema.

Review and Closing

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

Staple

Well good friends, it's time for us to conclude this month's lesson. We've filled it with so many truths that we don't have space to include much of a review. We will however quickly mention that studying and developing a deep understanding of ahaitukī-bhakti is a very worthwhile goal, for if we truly understand it; we will practice it, and thus we will desire only this service itself.

We know this lesson is a bit complex, but if we are dedicated to learning these truths, and if we sincerely pray to Śrī guru for his guidance and mercy, then we will be able to bring them into our hearts.

We look forward to meeting with you again next month, and as always, we keep you in our prayers.

**May you abandon all your selfish desires;
May you understand the goal of life; and
May you develop ahaitukī-bhakti.
We are, the servants of God's servants,
The IPBYS Prison Outreach Program.
All Glories to Śrīla Gurudeva!**

Glossary

Ahaitukī-bhakti: Pure bhakti that is motivated only by the desire to serve the Lord. Prayed for by Lord Caitanya, this bhakti has seven qualities [if it is pure; unmixed; one-pointed; free from material attachments; devoid of a result seeking mentality; all of the potencies and characteristics of Kṛṣṇa's bliss are embodied within it; and it is located entirely in the spiritual dimension, thus all of the qualities of this dimension are present in it.

Akiñcana: Without material possessions; devoid of desires for material enjoyment; describes one who feels he has nothing but Kṛṣṇa

Amiṣrā: Unmixed (with other practices)

Ānanda: Spiritual bliss; one aspect of Kṛṣṇa's form

Antaraṅga-śakti: The internal/personal potency of the Lord; all spiritual energies flow from this śakti

Artha: Wealth; something of value; economic development; one of the four goals sought by non-Vaiṣṇavas

Bahiraṅga-śakti: The external potency of the Lord; māyā; all aspects of the material world, from the subtle false ego to material objects are products of this energy

Bhajana: In a general sense, the practices of bhakti, such as hearing and chanting; deep immersion in the moods of bhakti

Cit: Awareness; consciousness; knowledge; one aspect of Kṛṣṇa's form

Dharma: Religiosity; duty; the proper performance of all of one's obligations; one of the four goals sought by non-Vaiṣṇavas

Hlādinī-śakti: The potency of the Lord which relates to the bliss/ānanda aspect of His form; the energy of the Lord by which He tastes bliss and causes others to taste it as well; Śrī Rādhā constitutes the full embodiment of this energy

Kāma: Sense gratification material desires; one of the four goals sought by non-Vaiṣṇavas

Kevala: (kay-vuh-luh) One pointed; exclusive

Mokṣa/Mukti: Liberation from material existence; mukti which involves merging with the Lord is never sought by Vaiṣṇavas, other aspects are accepted by some, but those who exclusively seek the service of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana reject all forms of mukti

Rādhā-kunda: A special pond; constructed by Kṛṣṇa for Rādhā, this pond is the most sacred place in existence due to the loving pastimes which take place there, lost to the sands of time, Rādhā-kunda was found by Lord Caitanya and reestablished by His devotee, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa

Gosvāmī

Samvit-śakti: The potency of the Lord which relates to the cit/awareness aspect of the Lord's form; the energy of the Lord by which He knows Himself and causes others to know Him; knowledge of absolute reality is only possible with the help of this energy

Sandhinī-śakti: The potency of the Lord which relates to existence aspect of His form; the energy by which he maintains His own existence and the existence of others; the spiritual abode of the Lord, as well as His eternal associates, are manifested by this energy

Sat: Existence; one aspect of Kṛṣṇa's form

Taṭastā-śakti: The marginal potency of the Lord; the jīva potency of the Lord; the spark of the existence, awareness, and bliss that compose the soul springs from this energy; although equal in quality to the Lord's personal energy, jīva śakti is far inferior in quantity, thus the jīva may fall under the influence of māyā, even though the energy of māyā is inferior

The Lord's Energies

Topmost Energy (para-śakti)
also known as
Personal Energy (svarūpa-śakti)
Internal Energy (antaraṅga-śakti)

Manifests as:

Energy of Existence (sandhinī-śakti)—Lord's form, abode, all spiritual objects

Energy of Awareness (samvit-śakti)—knowledge of Lord, all spiritual emotions and pastimes

Energy of Bliss (hlādinī-śakti)—Spiritual bliss, Śrī Rādhā

In Maya—These Three Manifest as:

Energy of Existence—All material bodies and objects

Energy of Awareness—material knowledge gathered or developed by the senses, which include the mind

Energy of Bliss—Pleasures of material senses

Marginal Energy (taṭastā-śakti/jīva-śakti)

Manifests as:

Sparks of minute spiritual consciousness which, having emanated from the unlimited consciousness of the Supreme Lord, maintain their own eternal individuality

External Energy (bahiraṅga-śakti/māyā-śakti)

Manifests as:

All material objects including both those subtle objects such as the mind and false ego and those made of gasses, liquids, and solids: All illusions of this world

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



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“Seva Kunja”

Painted by Śyāmarānī dāsī under the guidance of Bhaktivedānta Narayana Gosvāmī Maharaja



Rādhā Kṛṣṇa and Gaura Nitai

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

Staple

Lesson 20 Correspondence Course

1. Give at least three terms for pure bhakti.
2. What has Lord Caitanya taught us to desire?
3. Name the doer in the material worlds, the spiritual realm and the borderland between.
4. Who is Kṛṣṇa's guru?
5. Name the proper guides for bhajana.
6. Name the seven characteristics of ahaitukī bhakti.
7. Who clears the dirt from our hearts that covers our prema?
8. Name at least two benefits of having the knowledge that answers number 7 above.
9. Discuss your understanding of the iron rod in the fire and how it relates to awakening prema.
10. What is śuddha-sattva? What happens when it enters the heart?
11. Whose moods do we seek? What are these moods?
12. Describe the thirst that the residents of Vṛndāvana have for Kṛṣṇa.
13. What possessions does a pure devotee have? Can this always be seen by all observers? Why or why not?
14. Does pure bhakti always please Kṛṣṇa? Why or why not?
15. What are our spiritual forms composed of?
16. The ultimate supremacy of Vedic knowledge is _____.
17. What is svarūpa-śakti? Who possesses this potency and who is manifested from it?
18. How does sandhinī manifest?
19. How does saṁvit-śakti manifest?
20. How does hlādinī-śakti manifest?
21. Why does Śrī Rādhā manifest in an unlimited number of forms?
22. Name the three energies of action that flow from svarūpa-śakti. of these, which are we composed of?
23. Give two scientific principles that apply to spiritual truths as well?
24. How are the existence, awareness, and bliss energies manifested in the jīvas and in māyā?
25. Where can we find "the essence of all spiritual life?"
26. Should we pray for the removal of miseries, if not, why not?
27. How are we to control the mind?
28. Name and describe the four lesser goals of life.
29. Can we offer everything to the Lord? If not, why not?
30. Name the benefits of offering our activities to Kṛṣṇa.
31. What is the proper mood to perform our activities in?
32. What is real knowledge? Can we become a pure devotee without this knowledge?
33. How can we attain uttamā-bhakti?
34. What are the rewards for attaining uttamā-bhakti?
35. What are subsidiary devotional practices?
36. Since everything belong to Kṛṣṇa, what should we accept for ourselves?

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.