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THE JOURNEY TO PREMA

~ A Course in the Science of Bhakti-Yoga ~

Lesson 24

Please Chant:

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

IN THIS LESSON:

- Our Reason to Serve = The Pleasure Is His
- The Practices that Make Us Perfect
- The Qualities (Gunas) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa
- Hiding Salt with Sugar
- They're Here to Take Us Higher and Higher
- Qualities Unique to Śrī Kṛṣṇa
- The Sixty-Four Qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa



His Divine Grace

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja
(Affectionately called Śrīla Gurudeva)

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Dear servant of God,

Please accept our respects as we bow down and sincerely offer them to you. We want to start off this month's lesson by saying—CONGRATULATIONS! We extend this accolade to you because this is the last Lesson in the second full year of your studies. We're so glad you've stayed with us for this long and we hope you're appreciating your opportunity to follow the bhakti path.

In the last two yours we've shared a wide variety of spiritual truths with you. Some of these have been quite complex and full of details, while others have been presented in basic and simple ways. Although we've used many different quotes and sources of this knowledge, all of it has been designed to teach you the message that was given to us by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's, when he appeared on this planet as Lord Caitanya, some 500 years ago.

Because we know that it can be difficult to follow and absorb these truths the first time we are exposed to them, starting in the next lesson, we're going to do a summary study of what we have shared with you so far. As you review these truths, we'll also be asking you to do some self-evaluation so that you can determine how much spiritual progress you have made. We are confident that the combination of these two processes will be of great value to you.

In this lesson, we're going to spend most of our time discussing two lists. In the first list we'll share, we'll talk about the various practices or "limbs" of bhakti-yoga. While we have already shared some of these with you, we're going to cover many more in this lesson and we'll touch on those that we've already introduced as well.

The second list we will explore will be the sixty-four main qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Of course, as the Supreme Personality of God, He has an unlimited number of unmatched, charming and wonderful qualities, but this small list has been given to us as an aide to help us begin to develop an appreciation for who this Lord of our lives really is, for—To know, know, know Him, is to love, love, love Him.

We'll finish this lesson up with some quotes and prayers that you can use during your meditations on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, again asking you to spend some sincere and love-driven time each day focusing your consciousness on these qualities of the Lord, as you ask Śrī guru to help you bring them into your hearts.

Since the lists we'll cover will be long, we'll start out this month's lesson with a short section that contains just a few simple and yet powerful quotes from our ācāryas. Since the subject of bhakti is so vast and deep, we've spent a lot of time in this course trying to help you gain an understanding of the symptoms of this topmost science of the soul, but in this first section, we'll take the shortest possible route as we try to show you in just a few words the essence of path we all need to follow as we strive each day to take at least one more step on our journey to prema.

We thank you for joining us in our travels.

The Pleasure Is His

So far, we've shared a lot of information on bhakti with you, and yet, in a conversation He had with Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Lord Caitanya taught us this:

My dear Rūpa, please listen to Me. It is not possible to fully describe all of truths related to bhakti, therefore, I am just trying to give you a synopsis of the symptoms. (C.C. Madhya 19.136)

With this fact in mind, we can assure you that this course will never fully describe bhakti, and yet, in these next few quotes, we'll pass on the most basic of all these truths to you.

We'll begin by asking you a question—**Why do you perform bhakti?** Be honest. What is your personal motivation? What inspires you to study these lessons, chant the Holy Names, worship Śrī guru, or whatever practices you perform?

In contrast to the lengthy explanations we've shared with you

on the definition of bhakti, let us now pass on a simple, beautiful, and meaningful explanation of bhakti that is given to us by Śrīla Gurudeva.

All activities that are performed to please Kṛṣṇa are in the category of bhakti. Whatever you do to please Kṛṣṇa is bhakti. (Lecture—23 April 2008)

Is that the reason you study this course, chant the Holy Names, and so on? Is your only goal in doing so to please Kṛṣṇa?

If you answered, "no", to either of these last two questions, then we ask you to try to switch your motivation. The next time you perform any of the many activities we've suggested in this course, try to think, or, more importantly, try to **feel**—"My dear Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, I'm (chanting Your Names, learning about You, serving You, etc.) solely for Your pleasure. I ask for nothing in return. If You should feel a desire to grant me any reward, I only ask to be able to always serve, please, and remember both of You."

Of course, how we serve and please Kṛṣṇa is to be regulated per the teachings of our ācāryas. We are not to randomly try to decide how to please Him, and this truth is given to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Our only desire should be to serve Kṛṣṇa favorably, as He desires. If Kṛṣṇa wants something, then we should do it. Suppose I should ask a disciple, "My dear student, please give me a glass of water." If he thinks, "Prabhupāda wants a glass of water, but why not give him something better? Why not a glass of hot milk?" that is not service. In his consideration, hot milk is very palatable and better than water, yet, because I have asked for water, he has to give me water, not milk. This is favorable service. One has to understand what Kṛṣṇa wants. (The Science of Self Realization)

All rules can be expressed from two viewpoints—the prescriptive: the things we must do—and the prohibitive: the things we must not do—Śrīla Prabhupāda has just told us the prescriptive aspect of bhakti: that we must serve Kṛṣṇa favorably, as He desires, and in this next quote Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us how this lack of desire to please Kṛṣṇa effects even those activities which might otherwise seem like bhakti.

One is unable to apply the name bhakti-yoga even to chanting His names (kīrtana) when they are performed with intentions other than to please Kṛṣṇa.

In the next sections of this lesson, we will share one short, and one long list of those activities which Lord Caitanya has instructed us to both perform and avoid in our bhakti practices. As these come as His direct orders, we can be sure that each of them will please Him (at least so long as our motive for doing so is to provide this pleasure to Him). As part of this second list, we will find several practices that relate to the activity that the Lord has told us is the most pleasing to Him of all, for Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us:

Those who claim to be My direct devotees are actually not My devotees at all, but those who consider themselves only as the devotees of my devotees are truly My devotees. Accept this truth as My conclusive statement, for these are the topmost devotees of all. (Ādī Purāṇa)

To help us understand this truth, we must always remember this:

**By the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we meet Śrī guru: and
By the mercy of Śrī guru, we meet Śrī Kṛṣṇa.**

Śrīla Gurudeva expresses this truth in this way:

The mercy of Kṛṣṇa first manifests as the mercy of Śrī guru. From the bona fide guru, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself as the manifestation of His form which is the reservoir of all spiritual love and emotions, we can have the seed of bhakti. What is the seed of bhakti? It is the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa. This desire will come only from Śrī guru.

This wonderful and perfect cycle of mercy leads us to the final

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

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quotes we will share in this section. Here the circle of truths becomes complete, for we find that the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa lies in the service of Śrī guru, and since, as Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed out, all true service lies in serving favorably, as the person we are serving desires, if we want the seed of bhakti, if we truly want the desire to service Kṛṣṇa to grow in our heart, then Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us:

If we want bhakti, we must leave all other aspirations and desires other than to please the bona fide guru. Whatever we do, we should do to please Śrī guru—not to please all. You can never please all.

We need to understand, to act on, all these truths. The simple essence of bhakti is to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa by pleasing Śrī guru. Pleasing ourselves, our friends, our families, or others, by providing them with anything more than life's necessities and serving Śrī guru and Kṛṣṇa with a desire for anything other than an opportunity to walk the bhakti path will lead us nowhere. Pleasing Śrī guru and Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa will lead us to life's greatest treasure—prema.

Before you move on to examine the many ways we can perform these pleasing and requested services, please take a few minutes to go back and review the ***bold italic*** quotes in this section, asking those who have given us these truths to bring the essence of bhakti into your heart. In addition to this, we ask you to begin to put a very focused and concentrated effort into trying to switch the motive for your bhakti practices toward pleasing Śrī guru and Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Remembering that Śrī guru is very dear to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, we can be sure that we can please the Divine Couple by making offerings to, saying prayers to, remembering, and serving Śrī guru. Similarly, by serving Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, we will please Śrī guru, and we should also know that it will give immense pleasure to Śrī Kṛṣṇa when we serve or call on Śrī Rādhā in loving separation, and of course, will please Śrī Rādhā when we serve or call on Her most beloved, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

These should be our motives. Pleasing Śrī guru and Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa should drive our bhakti practices, for by practicing in this way, our personal selfish motives will disappear and our sādhanā-bhakti will awaken the emotions of bhāva-bhakti as we move closer and closer toward our goal of prema-bhakti.

The Practices that Make Us Perfect

When Lord Caitanya blessed us with His presence some 500 years ago, He gave us the most complete and detailed explanation of the path of bhakti that had ever been given before. He taught us every aspect of the path, from the most basic truths to the most exalted, even going so far as to deliver teachings that had not been revealed before.

A substantial portion of these truths are contained within the two most famous biographies that were written about Him. In specific, He disclosed a somewhat extensive list of the practices that can lead us to spiritual perfection during two long conversations that He had with the two brothers, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Later, in books written by these brothers, and by later Vaiṣṇavas as well, these practices were explained in detail.

In this lesson, we will rely on several of these sources in sharing Lord Caitanya's teachings with you. To avoid excessive repetition, we will list these sources here, at the outset of our discussion, later providing only the name of the ācārya whose teachings we are sharing with you. In addition to this notational style, we should tell you that the order these practices are given in is not the same in these books, and, since they have gone through various languages and translations, there are also some variations in the terms used as well as the explanations given. There are also practices that are very similar, that can be expressed in various ways, and there are even some practices that are repeated within these lists. For all these reasons, we will simply do our best to present these truths to you in ways that are clear and, we hope,

easy for you to grasp.

These practices, which are also known as the “limbs” of bhakti, were given to Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī by Lord Caitanya in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 22. 113-130. At that time, sixty limbs of bhakti were given, however, within the practice of Deity worship (arcana) there are four additional limbs that are included, thus, the number of practices that are included are sixty-four. We should also note that this is not by any means an all-inclusive list, as there are countless other ways we can serve both Śrī guru and Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. For example, Śrī guru may ask us to clean the Lord's temple, a practice that is not specifically mentioned in this list, and yet, as we mentioned in our opening section, if we perform this service solely to please Śrī guru then it is clearly included as a limb of bhakti.

This list was explained in detail by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in his book “Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu”—The Nectarean Ocean of Pleasurable Emotions Which Flows from Bhakti. This book was translated in a condensed form by Śrīla Prabhupāda in a book he entitled “The Nectar of Devotion”.

And our final source of knowledge on these prominent limbs of bhakti will come from “**Jaiva Dharma**” the master work of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura that we have relied on many times before.

We will also provide you with the Sanskrit terms for practices. While you will not need to learn these terms, having them available may help you to recognize those limbs that we have spoken of in past lessons.

We join you in offering our sincere thanks to these great ācāryas for bringing these truths to us and we stand with you, side-by-side and hand-in-hand as we ask them to help us engage in the practices that can make us perfect servants of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

(1) Śrī guru-padāśraya

Taking Shelter at the Lotus Feet of Śrī guru

In listing the limbs of bhakti, both Lord Caitanya and our ācāryas have given this as the first practice that we must follow. Throughout this course, we have tried to convey the critical role that Śrī guru plays in bhakti-yoga, therefore we will now share just a few comments from our ācāryas on this important process with you.

Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us:

In all the scriptures that promote bhakti, the unlimited glories of Śrī guru have been described. Without taking shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī guru it is impossible to enter the realm of bhajana. (Bhajana is a complete internal and external absorption in the limbs of bhakti with a mood of intense affection and attachment.) ***Therefore, out of all of the limbs of bhakti, taking shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī guru has been cited first. It is the duty of all faithful persons who have a desire to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa to take shelter at the lotus feet of a guru who is a genuine preceptor of the scriptures which expound the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and who is expert in understanding and explaining the mantras which describe Him.***

All anāṛthas (obstacles) are easily removed by the mercy of such a genuine guru and thus one also obtains the supreme favor of the Supreme Lord...

In Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (4.360) it is stated:

Even if a person incurs the displeasure of the Lord, Śrī guru may still give him protection, but if Śrī guru is displeased, there is no one to give him protection. Therefore, one should please Śrī guru by all endeavors of one's body, mind, and words.

The author Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī has also said—for one who pleases Śrī guru, the Supreme Lord is automatically pleased, but for one who displeases Śrī guru there is no means of obtaining success. I therefore meditate on Śrī guru, offer prayers to him, and bow down before him three times a day.

To take shelter of Śrī guru means to serve him and to receive both spiritual knowledge and Śrī Kṛṣṇa from him. The importance

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

of these aspects of Śrī guru will be discussed in these quotes from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

Service to Śrī guru, who is most dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is even more beneficial than directly serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We shall receive utmost benefit by serving Śrī guru.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the wealth of Śrī guru, so only Śrī guru can give us the Supreme Lord. It is solely by the mercy of Śrī guru that one will attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mercy and have direct darśana (meeting face-to-face) with Him.

The necessity of approaching Śrī Kṛṣṇa through the shelter of Śrī guru is a truth we all need to absorb into our hearts and one we need to remain fully aware of as we walk the bhakti path.

(2) Śrī Kṛṣṇa -dīkṣā -śikṣā

Receiving Initiation and Spiritual Instructions

In the past lessons, we have explained that there are two types of true gurus—dīkṣā and śikṣā—the initiating guru and the instructing guru respectively. Although both are to be considered equally worshipable, there is some slight variance in the functions they perform.

The dīkṣā guru bestows mantras upon us. These include both the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra and other mantras, all of which are designed to help us understand our eternal relationship with Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. For this reason, our dīkṣā guru can also be called our “mantra-guru”. We can have only one dīkṣā guru.

This giving of mantras is referred to by the English term “initiation”, and, while this mantra giving is an important part of this process, scriptures tell us that other spiritual benefits take place through the process of dīkṣā as well. **Hari-bhakti-vilāsa** states:

That religious process which bestows spiritual knowledge and destroys sin, the root of sin, and ignorance is called dīkṣā by learned authorities in the Absolute Truth.

Śrīla Gurudeva further instructs us:

This procedure of dīkṣā is not completed in one day; rather it begins on the day of initiation.

Our śikṣā-guru is that bona fide guru or gurus that give us spiritual instruction. As we advance, the general course taken is that we will become especially attached to one śikṣā guru and through our close relationship with him, we will learn how to engage in the practices of deep and internal absorption (bhajana) that relate to our own specific relationship and service to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. This relationship and service will flow directly from our svarūpa (our original and eternal spiritual personality and form).

In an upcoming lesson, we are going to dive even more deeply into these two topics—dīkṣā and śikṣā-guru—as we discuss how those inmates who face life without parole or death sentences can follow these principles of the bhakti path. In doing so, we will also explain how those who expect to be released will be able to make efforts to secure their relationships with Śrī guru as well.

(3) Pṛīti-pūrvaka-guru-sevā

Serving Śrī guru With Love

In explaining what our loving service (sevā) of Śrī guru should be based upon, Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us:

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself has declared to [His uncle] Uddhava: “Know the ācārya to be My very own self and never disrespect him. Never find fault with him, considering him to be an ordinary man, for all the demigods reside within Śrī guru.” All the anārtas (obstacles) which cannot be removed, even by very rigid practice of other limbs of bhakti, are easily destroyed by serving Śrī guru without duplicity. The mercy of Śrī guru is itself the mercy of the Supreme Lord. If a disciple has the mercy of Śrī guru but somehow displeases Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī guru will somehow take responsibility for the disciple's actions and ensure that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is pleased. But if Śrī guru is displeased, then Śrī Kṛṣṇa will not forgive such an offender. Therefore, considering Śrī guru to be one's supreme friend, one should serve him with

great love.

(4) Sādhū-mārgānusārah

Following the Path of the Sādhus

It is not up to us to individually determine the path we are to follow in our attempts to decide upon the goal of our lives or how we plan to reach it. In His first instructions to Lord Brahmā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa told him that we must follow the path of the ācāryas, and that same teaching is given again here. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains:

The method one follows to fix the mind at Śrī Kṛṣṇa's louts feet may be called sādhanā-bhakti, however, in doing so, one has a duty to follow the path the sādhus have followed because this path is always free from misery and hard labor, and it is the cause of all good fortune.

The sādhus, each following one another in succession, have made the path of bhakti-yoga clear and simple. Explaining it step-by-step, they have made it easy and removed all the obstacles so we can follow it fearlessly. It is therefore one's duty to depend only on their path. One's bhakti can never bring good fortune if he is violating the rules of the scriptures. One should understand that such unauthorized bhakti will only be the cause of confusion and disaster.

In various places in these lessons (especially in the revised lessons which we encouraged our early enrollees to go back to for review), we used quotes from Lord Buddha. Later we explained that although Lord Buddha was Himself an avatār, He descended to bewilder an atheistic class of so-called followers of the Vedas, for they were using scripture to justify animal slaughter. Other teachers have also given instructions on paths that are not consistent with the pure bhakti given to us by Lord Caitanya and the sādhus in His line. These other paths are discussed by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura:

One cannot attain single-pointed consciousness if one leaves the path of the sādhus and creates another path. Consequently, Datāreya, Buddha, and other teachers who were not able to understand śuddha (pure) bhakti accepted a shadow of this mood and propagated very insignificant paths of māyāvāda-miśrā (bhakti mixed with māyāvāda) and nāstikatā-miśrā (bhakti mixed with atheism). Although they designated these paths as bhakti, they are not bhakti at all; they can only create immense confusion and spiritual disaster.

In examine these truths, we can begin to understand the value of studying the books and lectures given to us by the various sādhus in our line, for in this way, we can see the consistency of the teachings they have shared with us, and thus our acceptance of and dedication to their path can become deeply imbedded into our hearts.

(5) Bhajana-rīti-nīti-praśna

Questions About the Procedures of Bhajana

In a general sense, “bhajana” essentially means the same thing as bhakti—to serve, or more specifically, to lovingly serve with a desire to please. However, as we've noted in this lesson, on a higher level, bhajana can also refer to the condition of the mind/consciousness/heart that takes place as we become more advanced along the bhakti path. In either case, it is our responsibility, as true followers of this path, to make serious inquiries into the methods of following it.

In discussing dharma, we shared that this term can be translated as “religion”. In explaining this fifth limb of bhakti, the religion/path of the sādhus is referred to as “sad-dharma”, and, in quoting from śāstra (scripture), Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī tells us the value of inquiry into the true path.

Those whose minds are exceedingly anxious to know all about sad-dharma, very quickly attain all of their cherished goals.

As your friends, servants, and ever well-wishers, all of us at the IPBYS Prison Outreach Program encourage you to use the powers of the mind for seeking out the means to attain life's

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

Staple greatest treasure and thus focusing it on that goal, for this type of anxious endeavor will allow you to leave the anxieties related to trying to seek out so-called material pleasures far behind. Which leads us directly to our next practice/limb of bhakti...

(6) Kṛṣṇārthe akhila-bhoga-tvāga

Renunciation of All Material Enjoyments for the Sake of Kṛṣṇa

This process is explained to us by Śrīla Gurudeva:

To enjoy material pleasure through activities such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and mating is called “bhoga” (material enjoyment). This bhoga is entirely opposed to bhajana. Bhajana becomes easily accessible by giving up such material enjoyments for the sake of Kṛṣṇa bhajana. A person attached to sense enjoyment is like a person addicted to intoxication. He becomes so engrossed in the enjoyment of material pleasure that he cannot perform pure bhajana. Therefore, he should only accept that food which has been offered to Śrī Kṛṣṇa (bhagat-prasāda) in the mood of service. He should protect and maintain the body only to keep it fit for the service of Kṛṣṇa. He should give up all types of material enjoyment, particularly on holy days such as Ekādaśī, and the appearance days of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Lord Caitanya, Lord Nṛsiṃha (the half-man half-lion form) and so on.

(7) Tirtha-vāsaḥ tirtha-māhātmya-śravanam

To Live in a Sacred Place and To Hear the Greatness of Such Places

The Vedas have extensively described the glories of such holy places as the sacred rivers and those places where the Lord lived or carried out His pastimes, even telling us that residence there awakens great steadiness (niṣṭhā) in our bhakti and results in the attainment of the spiritual worlds. For those of us who cannot physically reside there, we should place ourselves there mentally and with our hearts, and we should follow this instruction of Śrīla Gurudeva:

Those who are incapable of living at such holy places can hear the glories of those places. By doing so a strong desire will arise to live there. When the time is ripe, they may then attain the good fortune to reside at a holy place.

(8) Sva-bhakti-nirvāhanurūpa-bhojanādi-svikāram

Accepting Only What Is Required For the Sustenance of Bhakti

The path of bhakti has at times been described as a “middle path”, for it rejects the extremes of both excessive enjoyment or attachment and the extremes of excessive renunciation as well.

In accordance with number (6) above, material enjoyment, or bhoga, is so important to some, that those who focus their lives on attaining it are referred to as “bhogīs”. At the other end of this spectrum are followers of impure paths that, although theoretically aimed at superior goals, are to intent on denying all enjoyment and physical care of the body, often even going to the extremes of intentionally inflicting torturous pains as a means of detaching themselves from bodily identification.

In bhakti, as was mentioned in number (6) above, we renounce material enjoyments that are meant for our own pleasure. In doing so, we still allow for common sense sustenance, and maintenance of the body and we graciously accept whatever pleasures are automatically included within them. For example, the food prepared for and offered to Deities is usually quite delicious. In accepting it with a service mood, we still enjoy its flavors, but these pleasures are acceptable because it was pleasing Śrīla Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Their Deity forms that drove our preparation of these foods, and not our own desires to enjoy them. These truths are related in this quote from a book by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

A wise person, one who actually knows the value of wealth, accepts only as much wealth and other things as is required in order to be steadfast in carrying out one’s obligations in the matter of bhakti. For if one accepts more or less than one’s

actual requirements, he falls down from spiritual life and thus his real wealth becomes spoilt.

In this regard, we also refer you back to Lesson 6 in this course, where we told you about Śrīla Prabhupāda. In calling him, “an ācārya of proper attachment”, we showed how he used millions of dollars in resources properly, by engaging them all in the service of his guru and the spreading of Lord Caitanya’s message.

(9) Śrī-Ekādaśī-vrata

Observing the Vow of Ekādaśī

In describing this limb of bhakti, the very specific details relating to the exact day we are to fast are given, however, since we provide the proper day for fasting in our monthly newsletters, this information will not be covered here.

In Lesson 5 of this course, and in our newsletters as well, we have shared the value and importance of Ekādaśī, so here, we will simply share two quotes with you. The first discusses the standards for true observance, and in the second we find the simple and pure reason for observing this vow. Śrīla Gurudeva tells us:

To honor the day of the Lord properly one should observe celibacy the day before. Then on Ekādaśī one should fast even from water and remain awake throughout the night, performing continuous bhajana. On the next day, one should remain celibate and break the fast at the appropriate time. Fasting from even water means that one must also refrain from taking food offered to the Deity (mahā-prasāda). Unless one does so, one cannot be said to be observing a complete fast.

For those who are incapable of observing complete fasting throughout the day an alternative arrangement has been given. By the statements of scripture, it is understood that suitable foods such as fruits may be taken in the evening by those incapables of full observance. (The list of suitable foods is found in Lesson 5)

The simple and pure reason to observe Ekādaśī is given in Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilasā (12.3):

Because the vow to fast on Ekādaśī is invariable, it must certainly be followed. By doing so, all sins are eradicated, all purposes fulfilled, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is pleased.

Of the three results given here, which one is most important to you?

(10) Aśvattha-tulasī-dhātri-go-brahmana-Vaiṣṇava-sammānam

Offering Respect to the Aśvattha Tree, Tulasī, The Banyan Tree, the Cows, Brahmānas, and Vaiṣṇavas

Further study of the books we listed as sources for these limbs of bhakti will give details of all these activities, here we rely on Śrīla Gurudeva for a short summary of the reasoning behind this limb.

Those who are eligible for the practice of vaidha-bhakti, while residing in this world, are obliged to various living entities for their maintenance and livelihood. They are obliged to trees that provide shade like the banyan, to trees that provide fruits, to trees that are worthy of worship like tulasī, to beneficial animals like the cow, to the brahmānas who give instructions on dharma and preserve the integrity of society, and to the Vaiṣṇavas, who are devotees of the Lord. They should worship, meditate on, and offer respect to all of these. By such activities, they can protect their existence.

In our line of ācāryas, the worship of both the Vaiṣṇavas and the sacred plant tulasī are especially important. We have discussed the importance of the Vaiṣṇavas many times. As to the Tulasī plant, Lord Caitanya Himself would chant His japa while seated in front of a tulasī tree and it was through the offering of flowers from this sacred plant, along with some water from a holy river, that Śrī Advaita pleased the Lord and thus called Lord Caitanya to this planet.

These first ten limbs of bhakti are considered to be the preliminary regulations—the things we must do to enter the temple of bhakti. Of these, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura tells us:

The first three—taking shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī guru, taking dīkṣā and śikṣā from him, and serving him with faith—are the main activities.

After this, the next ten limbs are prohibitions. These are activities to be avoided by those on the bhakti path. The fact that these next ten limbs are acts to be avoided is seen by the last word in each, tyāgah, which means “to give up, renounce, have no connection with.” In some places, we find these “don’ts” listed as qualifications we need in order to enter the temple of bhakti, rather than being direct bhakti practices, but regardless of such specifics, Śrīla Gurudeva informs us that it is, “*Only by refraining from these activities that our bhakti can attain full nourishment*”. In other words, if we engage in the acts we must do, but neglect to avoid those we must not do, our bhakti will fail to produce the fruit we seek—prema.

(11) Asādhū-saṅga-tvāgah

Giving Up the Association of Those Who Are Averse to Bhakti

All association with such people need not be given up. In our everyday dealings in this world, some contact with non-Vaiṣṇavas is expected, therefore, to explain where the distinction lies we need simply to turn to Śrī guru. Śrīla Gurudeva explains this truth:

The word “saṅga” meaning “association”, implies attachment. Therefore, simply being in the presence of others or having a conversation with them is not called saṅga. Saṅga occurs when attachment arises while in their presence or while talking to them.

It is this association with attachment that is strictly prohibited. As trees and plants perish due to excessive heat and contaminated air, the bhakti-creeper also dries up due to the association of persons averse to Kṛṣṇa. This applies to four types of people: (1) sensualistic people who are devoid of a desire to serve Kṛṣṇa and attached to material enjoyment; (2) those who are attached to the association of women; (3) those whose hearts are infected with the faults of atheism or māyāvāda; and (4) those who are entrenched in karma. One should keep a safe distance from the association of these four kinds of people.

We know we’ve spoken of this truth before, but as you know by now, we’re never afraid to repeat ourselves, for there’s no such thing as too much truth.

(12) Bahu-śiṣya-karana-tvāgah

Renouncing the Desire to Recruit Many Disciples

This “don’t” is explained by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura:

It is a great fault to accept many disciples in order to gain wealth or increase one’s fame and prestige. To make many disciples, one must also accept those who do not have sufficient faith and it is an offense to accept the unfaithful as disciples. Only those who have faith are qualified to be disciples; other are not.

(13) Bahu-ārambha-tvāgah

Renouncing Excessive Undertakings

The prohibition given here relates to both materialistic endeavors and, in some cases, even to those activities that can be a part of bhakti, such as holding festivals or constructing temples. Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us:

Pompous and showy enterprises or enormous festivals are called excessive undertakings. They should be avoided under all circumstances. The purport is that one’s bhajana is not to be disturbed due to accepting more than is necessary to maintain one’s existence. By taking up grandiose enterprises one becomes so attached to them that one cannot fix the mind in bhajana. Therefore, one is to renounce excessive undertakings.

How this prohibition relates to temple construction is

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discussed by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

We can see in the life of various ācāryas in the line of Lord Caitanya that they are not very enthusiastic about constructing temples. However, if somebody comes forward to offer some service, the same reluctant ācāryas will encourage the building of such costly temples by such servitors...

...In other words, a spiritual master (ācārya/guru) needn’t be very enthusiastic for constructing temple buildings simply in the name of so-called spiritual advancement. Rather, his first and foremost activity should be to preach. In this connection, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura recommended that a spiritual master print books. If one has money. Instead of constructing costly temples, one should spend his money for the publication of authorized books in different languages for propagating the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

These prohibitions show that even those acts which may seem to be full of bhakti can be improper, and thus we can see why the guidance and explanations of our ācāryas are so important to us.

(14) Bahu-śiṣya-vyākhyā-vivādādi-tvāgah

Renouncing the Study of Many Scriptures In Order to Make Novel Explanations and Arguments

In this prohibition, the careful study that we have repeatedly encouraged in this course is discussed, as well as the importance of maintaining a clear focus on the subjects we decide to spend our time on. Śrīla Gurudeva describes these truths:

The śāstras are like an ocean. In taking instructions on some particular subject in is best to study the śāstras related to that subject from beginning to end and by thorough examination. By reading only a little on any subject one does not attain full knowledge of it. Especially in regard to the bhakti-śāstras, if one does not apply the mind and study with careful consideration, then one’s intelligence will not absorb the truths related to the knowledge of the relationships between the jīvas, māyā, and the Supreme Lord.

Bear in mind that only the direct meaning of the śāstras should be taken. By presenting many varied explanations of the scriptures contrary conclusions ensue. Too much argument and disputation causes the mind to become perplexed and thus it cannot become fixed in bhajana.

Our ācāryas have also taught us that explaining or reciting the scriptures as a means of procuring income is also prohibited.

(15) Vyavahāre kārpanya-tvāgah

Giving Up Miserly Behavior

This prohibition applies to both obtaining those objects we need and to losing them as well. As we mentioned when we spoke of bhakti as the “middle path” (number (8) above), it is necessary to acquire suitable items for food, clothing, and so on. To refuse to attain these needs is a type of miserly behavior we must give up.

Since things in this world are temporary, we are subject to lose these necessities even after we attain them, and it is also miserly if we lament their loss due to our attachment to them. Thus, even in the presence of such loss, a devotee should not become disturbed, choosing instead to always focus the mind on remembering Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The third aspect of this prohibition is that we should not be miserly regarding serving the Lord. Per our means, we should happily and willingly donate our time, our actions, and our money toward the service of the sādhus, the celebrating of holy festivals, the printing of books, supporting preaching efforts, and other such activities.

(16) Śoka-krodhādi-tvāgah

Giving Up Lamentation, Anger, and So On

Śrīla Gurudeva explains:

Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not appear in the heart that is filled with lamentation, fear, anger, greed, and envy. Lamentation and illusion may arise due to separation from friends and relatives,

Staple *and due to obstacles arising in the fulfillment of one's desires. However, one should not fall under the sway of such lamentation and illusion. One certainly, feels lamentation on being separated from one's children, but one should dispel such lamentation by remembering Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, one should practice fixing the mind on the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.*

This instruction is especially applicable for the inmates we reach out to. We are well aware of the separation from friends and loved ones that takes place in the lives of inmates, and although it is difficult for anyone to manage the emotions that accompany these situations, by following the best advice that anyone can give us, the advice of Śrī guru, we can learn to replace our material emotions with meditations on Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and thus refocus our consciousness on the type of totally joyful and soul satisfying topics that we are meant to dwell on and which easily remove our insignificant material concerns from our heart.

(17) Devatāntara-nindā-tyāgaḥ

Giving Up Blasphemy and Disrespect of Demigods

All jīvas should worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but due to the influence of the guṇas (the forces of māyā that form our desires and personalities) some are attracted to worshipping various demigods who will, in turn, fulfill their material desires. Since their faith exactly corresponds to the influence of the guṇas upon them, we should not disrespect these people or the demigods they worship. By the mercy of the demigods, who are themselves great devotees, their worshipper's can make gradual progress and purify their hearts from the influence of the guṇas.

While such worship is not to be ridiculed, it is also not recommended, as is explained here by Śrīla Gurudeva.

It is essential to have exclusive and undivided devotion toward Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the original God of all gods. No one should consider the demigods as independent from Śrī Kṛṣṇa and thus offer separate worship to them. But one should not disrespect the demigods upon seeing others worshipping them. One should know all demigods as servants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and thus offer respect to them. However, one should continuously meditate upon and remember only Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

(18) Prānī-mātre udvega-tyāgaḥ

Giving Up Harassment of Other Living Entities

The Vedas teach us:

A person who does not disturb or cause pain in the mind of any living entity, who treats everyone like a loving father does his children, whose heart is pure, is certainly to soon become favored by the Supreme Lord.

This sentiment is repeated by Śrīla Gurudeva who says:

Śrī Kṛṣṇa becomes very quickly satisfied by those who maintain an attitude of compassion towards other living entities and who do not create any kind of anxiety for them, either by body, mind, or words. Mercy is the fundamental dharma (religious principle) of Vaiṣṇavas.

We should mention here that this compassion is not to be limited to humans. The slaughter of countless jīvas in animal bodies is also a clear sign of a lack of compassion.

In addition, we should note that the harassment we are to give up includes that of "body, mind, and words", thus even the use of abusive language and the belittling of those we feel superior to or aggressive towards should also be given up. Our inmate contributor tells us that verbal sparring is a prevalent pastime in prisons. By understanding that such words are driven by the false ego, and by adopting the attitudes taught to us in the above quotes, we can overcome this tendency and develop the good qualities that lead to our being favored by the Lord.

(19) Sevāparādha-namāparādha-tyāgaḥ

Giving Up All Offenses Regarding Service and The Holy Names

In this course, we shared the offenses to the Holy Names, and

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we told you how to overcome them as well. Of course, we cannot avoid them if we do not know what they are, therefore, if you failed to carefully study and memorize them we ask you to go back and do so, even if this means writing to us and asking to start the course over again, (which by the way, is never a bad thing to do as repetition leads to absorption of truths.)

As to offenses in our service, these are listed as being thirty-two in number, with additional lists also considered, the number reaches more than sixty. Although this is a rather long list, most these offenses are self-explanatory, so, to help you in your bhakti, we will now share this compiled list with you. While some may seem similar or repetitive, we will simply give you these offenses as compiled by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Offenses to Be Avoided

In the supplementary Vedic literatures, there is the following list of 32 offenses in the matter of serving the Lord: 1) One should not enter the temple of the Deity in a car or palanquin or with shoes on his feet. 2) One should not fail to observe the various festivals for the pleasure of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, such as Janmāṣṭamī (Kṛṣṇa's appearance day). 3) One should not avoid bowing down before the Deity. 4) One should not enter the temple to worship the Lord without washing his hands or feet after eating. 5) One should not enter the temple in a contaminated state. (According to Vedic scripture, if someone dies in the family the whole family becomes contaminated for some time.) 6) One should not bow down on one hand. 7) One should not circumambulate in front of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (the process of circumambulating is that one should begin circumambulating from the Deity's right-hand side and come around. This should be performed outside the temple structure at least three times daily.) 8) One should not spread his legs before the Deity. 9) One should not sit before the Deity holding the ankles, elbows, or knees with his hands. 10) One should not lie down before the Deity of Kṛṣṇa. 11) One should not accept prasādam before the Deity. 12) One should never speak a lie before the Deity. 13) One should not talk very loudly before the Deity. 14) One should not talk with others before the Deity. 15) One should not cry or howl before the Deity. 16) One should not quarrel or fight before the Deity. 17) One should not chastise anyone before the Deity. 18) One should not speak very harshly to others before the Deity. 19) One should not wear a fur blanket before the Deity. 20) One should not eulogize or praise anyone else before the Deity. 21) One should not speak any ill names before the Deity. 22) One should not pass air before the Deity. 23) One should not fail to worship the Deity according to his means. (In the Bhagavad-Gita, it is said that the Lord is satisfied if some devotee offers Him even a little water. This formula prescribed by the Lord is universally applicable, even for the poorest man. But that does not mean that one who has sufficient means to worship the Lord very nicely should also adopt this method and try to satisfy the Lord simply by offering water and a leaf. If he has sufficient means, he should offer nice decorations, nice flowers, nice food stuffs and observe all ceremonies. It is not that one should try to satisfy the Lord with a little water and a leaf, and for himself spend all his money in sense gratification.) 24) One should not eat anything which is not offered first to Kṛṣṇa. 25) One should not fail to offer fresh fruit and grains to Kṛṣṇa, according to the season. 26) After cooking, no one should be offered any foodstuff unless it is first offered to the Deity. 27) One should not offer obeisance's silently before the spiritual master; or in other words, one should recite the prayers to the spiritual master aloud while offering obeisance's. 28) One should not fail to offer some praise in the presence of the spiritual master. 29) One should not praise himself before the spiritual master. 30) One should not deride the demigods before the Deity.

Besides this list, there are a number of other offenses mentioned in the Varāha Purāṇa. They are as follows: 1) One should not touch the Deity in a dark room. 2) One should not fail to strictly follow the rules and regulations in worshipping the

Deity. 3) One should not enter the temple of the Deity without first making some sound. 4) One should not offer any food to the Deity which has been seen by dogs or other lower animals. 5) One should not break the silence while worshipping. 6) One should not pass urine or evacuate while engaging in worshipping. 7) One should not offer incense without offering some flowers. 8) Useless flowers without any fragrance should not be offered. 9) One should not fail to wash his teeth very carefully every day. 10) One should not enter the temple directly after sexual intercourse. 11) One should not touch a woman during her menstrual period. 12) One should not enter the temple after touching a dead body. 13) One should not enter the temple wearing garments of red or blue color, or which are unwashed. 14) One should not enter the temple after seeing a dead body. 15) One should not pass air in the temple. 16) One should not be angry within the temple. 17) One should not enter the temple after visiting a crematorium. 18) One should not belch before the Deity. So, until one has fully digested his food, he should not enter the temple. 19) One should not smoke marijuana. 20) One should not take opium or similar intoxicants. 21) One should not enter the Deity room or touch the Deity after having smeared oil all over his body. 22) One should not show disrespect to a scripture about the supremacy of the Lord. 23) One should not introduce any opposing scripture. 24) One should not chew betel [a mild intoxicant] before the Deity. 25) One should not offer a flower that has been kept in an unclean pot. 26) One should not worship the Deity while sitting on the bare floor: one must have a sitting place or a carpet. 27) One should not touch the Deity before he has taken a bath. 28) One should not decorate his forehead with the three lined tilak. (This is worn by non-Vaiṣṇavas.) 29) One should not enter the temple without washing his hands and feet.

Other rules are that one should not offer foodstuff that is cooked by a non-Vaiṣṇava. One should not worship the Deity before a non-devotee. One should not engage in worship of the Lord while seeing a non-devotee... When a devotee is perspiring, he should not engage in worshipping the Deity. Similarly, there are many other prohibitions, such as one should not cross or step over flowers offered to the Deities, nor should one take a vow in the name of God. These are among the different kinds of offenses in the matter of executing devotional service, and one should be careful to avoid them.

While these offenses should be avoided, they are less serious than the offenses to the Holy Names. By doing our best to avoid these offenses in our service, and by chanting without offenses as well, the reactions to our service offences will be vanquished. If, however, we ignore these regulations and prohibitions, and we knowingly and intentionally commit these offenses, thinking that we will rely on the Holy Names to overcome them, we commit a very serious offense to the Names and the reactions we must face will become even more severe. This is why we have shared this list of service offenses with you.

While some may seem minor (wearing red or blue garments before the Deity) and other more serious (taking intoxicants like marijuana or opium/heroin), all are to be avoided. We ask you to make the avoidance of offenses an important part of your bhakti practices.

Having shared this list, we now return to the sixty-four limbs of bhakti, where we will complete the ten activities which are to be given up.

(20) Guru-Kṛṣṇa -bhakta-nindā-sahana-tvāgah

One Should Not Tolerate Blasphemy of

Śrī guru, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, or the Devotees

When we shared the offenses to the Holy Names we told you that it is offensive to blaspheme (insult or criticize) Śrī guru or the sādhus. The offense spoken of here deals with how we are to react if we are present when such criticism takes place. Although our choices in this situation may seem extreme, Śrīla Prabhupāda teaches us:

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

Vaiṣṇavas may be very tolerant and meek, foregoing everything for his personal honor, but when it is a question of the honor of Kṛṣṇa or His devotee, they will not tolerate any insult.

There are three ways of dealing with such insults. If someone hears another criticizing by words, he should be so expert that he can defeat the opposing party by argument. If he is unable to defeat the opposing party, then the next step is not that he should just stand there meekly, but should give up his life. The third process is followed if he is unable to execute the above mentioned two processes, and this is that one must leave the place and go away. If a devotee does not do any of these three processes, he falls down from his position in devotion.

The blaspheme of Śrī guru or the Vaiṣṇavas is a severe offense that we must avoid at all cost.

The Nine Primary Bhakti Practices

After listing the ten preliminary limbs that we should practice and the ten preliminary acts that we must give up, Lord Caitanya listed what are known to be the nine primary bhakti practices. As we have shared and discussed several of these with you in this course, we will only briefly mention those limbs of bhakti. For new limbs, we will share more details.

(21) Śravanam—Hearing

Hearing is the first limb of bhakti because it is by hearing that we learn of all the bhakti truths and practices. At first, we will hear randomly and without faith, but later, we will seek out the association of devotees and faithfully listen, so that we can learn how to practice bhakti and develop our knowledge of the names, forms, qualities, associates and pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

(23) Smaranam—Remembering

In considering the importance of remembering, we need only consider the number one rule of bhakti—Always remember Kṛṣṇa and never forget Him. We should also know that the perfect state of the mind, which is known as samādhi, is just the highest and purest stage of remembering, where we become oblivious to outside reality, being aware of only the objects of meditation in our hearts.

These three; hearing, chanting, and remembering are the primary limbs of bhakti, for all other practices are included within them, and of these three, kīrtana is superior because when we chant the Holy Names, hearing and remembering are simultaneously performed as well.

(24) Pāda-sevanam—Serving the Lotus Feet

Also, known by the Sanskrit term “paricaryā” which means “serving”, this limb includes practices such as seeing the Deity; touching, circumambulating, or following the Deity in processions; visiting holy places; cleansing articles to be used in the Lord’s worship; playing musical instruments for the Deity; and other such services. Serving Śrī guru and the sādhus is also included in this limb.

(25) Arcanam—Deity Worship

Along with worshipping the Deity, the observation of such holy days as Kṛṣṇa’s appearance day and fasting on Ekādaśī can be included in this limb of bhakti. As the observance of Ekādaśī was found as number (9) above, we can see how all other limbs are included within the nine primary limbs. We can also note that since Ekādaśī is known to be the Lord Himself, by observing our vows on that day, we worship the Lord in one of His many unique forms. We should also know that the worship of Śrī guru and the sādhus is included in this limb as well.

(26) Vandanam—Offering Prayers and Bowing Before the Lord

The Vedas contain many authorized prayers. These are not the type of prayers that are often recited, where we simply ask the Lord to fulfill our personal desires, instead they show our humility and our honor for the Lord as we glorify Him. Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us that, “A devotee should select some of these

Staple prayers for recitation.

Along with offering prayers, bowing down before the Lord has also been included in this limb. We are to humbly and submissively offer our honor and show our respect to both the Lord and His advanced devotees. In regard to how we bow down to the Deity, we are to fall flat like a stick, keeping one's left side to the Deity and offering these with items to the Lord: our hands, feet, knees, chest, forehead, mind, and speech. When bowing to Śrī guru, we offer these same eight items, but we directly face him. This method of paying respects is called offering pranāma (pruh-nām/like mom).

(27) Dāsya—Servitude

The most basic, pure and original characteristic (svarūpa) of all jīvas is that of being an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, to remain consciously aware of this fact constitutes the primary means of engaging in this limb of bhakti. Disregarding all material designations, the devotee should remain absorbed in the conception that, "I am a servant of Kṛṣṇa."

(28) Sakhyam—Friendship

There are two types of bhakti—vaidhi and rāgānuga. In vaidhi-bhakti, the devotee maintains extreme feelings of respect for the Lord and is always aware of His power and position as ALMIGHTY GOD. In this state, he also pays strict attention to the rules and regulations of bhakti. In rāgānuga bhakti, one focuses on the sweet side of the Lord. Paying no attention to the powers of the Lord, the devotee can even rise to levels of prema where feelings of being equal to the Lord arise, and it is at this level that feelings of friendship take place. Therefore, this limb of bhakti is most prominent in rāgānuga bhakti. There can be some levels of friendship expressed in vaidhi-bhakti, such as in the process of Śrī worship, but the higher levels that are based on the moods of rāgānuga bhakti will not be fully experienced.

(29) Ātma-nivedanam—Self-surrender

This limb is an advanced stage of number (27) dāsya, where the realization of one's true position as a servant of Kṛṣṇa rises to such a pure level that all attachment to and identification with the false ego, all sense of "I" and "mine", are completely dissolved.

Śrīlā Rūpa Gosvāmī tells us that reaching this stage requires true dedication, consistent endeavor, and of course the mercy and guidance of Śrī guru. In ātma-nivedana, one gives himself completely to the will of the Lord. This state has been expressed in the prayers of Śrīlā Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

I own nothing, and thus this mind, this body and the members of its family, as well as the affairs they conduct and the objects they dwell on and seem to possess are all offered to You for Your service. You can do with them as You like. You are the supreme possessor of everything, so if You like You can kill me or You can give me protection. All authority belongs to You. I have nothing to claim as my own.

If we reach this stage, we will have no concern for our maintenance or sustenance. Depending entirely upon the Lord, our only concern will be to engage in the service of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Practices Directly Related to the Deities

Many of the limbs of bhakti are directly related to the Deities. Since the Deities are forms of the Lord Himself, even such limbs as hearing and remembering can be included in this category, but here, we will list those that are very clear in their relationship.

(30) Nirmālya-dhāranam**To Accept the Remnants of Articles Offered to the Deities**

This limb includes articles such as garlands, sandalwood paste, clothing, scents, ornaments, and other items. The Vedas tell us that by decorating ourselves with these items we are certain to conquer the illusions of māyā.

(31) Nṛtyam—Dancing Before the Deity

Lord Caitanya was known for His beautiful and captivating dancing. This tradition is carried on by all His followers and we are even assured of receiving benefits for this activity. By

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

referring to a quote from the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Śrīlā Prabhupāda tells us:

Just as by clapping the hands one can cause many birds to fly away, similarly the birds of all sinful activities which are sitting on the body can be made to fly away simply by dancing and clapping before the Deity of Kṛṣṇa.

(32) Abhyutthānam**Rising from One's Seat in Honor of the Lord**

Certain festivals include bringing the Deities out of the temple and touring Them about. When we see the Deity approaching, we should stand and courteously offer honor and greetings to the Lord. This same practice applies to Śrī guru and the sādhus as well. By carrying out this practice the Lord is pleased and our bhakti flourishes.

(33) Anuvrajyā**To Follow Behind the Deity**

When the Deity is touring the city, we should faithfully follow behind, besides, or in front of the cart or palanquin that He is traveling on.

(34) Śrī-mūrti-sthāne gamanam**To Visit the Place where the Deity is Established**

We should visit both the temples where the Deity resides and the places where the Lord conducts His pastimes. While there, we should gaze upon the Deity, bow down to Him, and recite suitable prayers. The Vedas tell us:

The two feet that journey to the holy places where Śrī Kṛṣṇa resides and carries out His pastimes are praiseworthy because by doing so they become able to cross over the desert of material existence.

(35) Parikramā—Circumambulation

While keeping the object to our right side, we should walk around the temple where the Deity resides, around places associated with His pastimes, His sacred plant, tulasī, and so on. In general, we should complete four cycles, with the Vedas assuring us that by carrying out these rotations we will not have to repeatedly rotate in the cycle of birth and death.

(36) Gītam—Singing

We should sing such loved filled songs as those written by our ācāryas before the Deity. Such songs are full of such sweet devotional moods as full surrender to the Lord and longing for His personal service.

(37) Mahā-prasāda-seva**Honoring the Remnants of Food Offered to the Deities**

Food and beverages offered to the Deities are called mahā-prasāda (great mercy). By honoring these remnants, the obstacles on our bhakti path are destroyed and our bhakti is cultivated.

We are to limit our consumption of foods to mahā-prasāda as much as we possibly can, for this practice will also help us in gaining control of the tongue, which is a very difficult sense for us to control.

(38) Caranāmṛta-pānam**Drinking the Nectar Used to Wash the Lord's Lotus Feet**

In temples, the Deities are bathed with various substances such as honey, sugar water, fruit juices, milk and so on. These are collected together, forming a delicious nectar. We are to regularly and with great faith drink this nectar.

(39) Dhūpa-mālvādi-sarabha-grahanam**Smelling the Fragrance of Incense and Flowers Offered to the Lord**

This limb is self-explanatory. In most temples, these items will be passed round during the worship ceremonies so that those presents may complete this limb of bhakti.

(40) Śrī-mūrti-darśanam**To View the Deity Form of the Lord**

To see the Lord face-to-face is called darśana. We should perform this limb daily either in the temple or in one's home. By doing so, we can directly taste the beauty and sweetness of the Lord. [The Deity is known as "Śrī mūrti"]

(41) Śrī-mūrti-sparśanam**Touching the Deity**

The direct service, such as the bathing and dressing of the Deities is carried out by brahmānas (priests). However, to show Their mercy to others, arrangements are made for others to approach the Deities and touch Their lotus feet as a means of receiving Their mercy.

(42) Ārātrika-darśanam**Viewing the offerings to the Deities**

In temples, various offerings are made to the Deities. The number and timing of these offerings is not always the same, therefore at least three viewings of the Deities during these offerings are recommended, preferably to take place at the three junctions of the day—sunrise, noon, and sundown.

Although there is one more limb that directly relates to the Deities—serving Them with faith—we will not number or list that practice here as it is contained within a special group of highly potent practices that will close out this list of the sixty-four limbs of bhakti.

Various Additional Practices**(43) Harināmākṣara-dhāraṇam****To Wear the Letters of the Lord's Holy Name**

This practice involves stamping the arms and other principal limbs of the body with the letters of the Holy Name. This is done with paste made from ground sandalwood and holy water.

(44) Saṅkīrtanam**Congregational Chanting of the Lord's Holy Names**

Although the limb of kīrtana (number 22) has already been listed, the loud group chanting of devotees who have assembled together to glorify the Lord is given as a separate practice. In this degraded age of Kali-yuga, saṅkīrtana of the Holy Names (nāma-saṅkīrtana) is accepted as the super-most process of religion (dharma). Our ācārya, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī teaches us that *in this age, all other limbs of bhakti should be accompanied by the chanting of the Holy Names.*

(45) Japah**Utterance of the Holy Names and Mantras**

This limb of bhakti can be conducted in three ways: (1) verbally, with clear and audible enunciation; (2) in a whisper, with soft pronunciation and only a slight movement of the lips, being heard only by one's own ears; and (3) within the mind, by meditation on the Names or a mantra.

By the analysis of our ācāryas, the first of these three, verbal japa, is included within kīrtana, and the last, meditational, is included with remembrance, but they are listed under japa as well.

As to their levels of effectiveness, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī tells us that *the practice of remembrance of the names will not lead to bliss unless one's heart is already pure, whereas the practice of nāma-saṅkīrtana does not depend upon a purified heart, therefore it is more effective and of greater importance.*

(46) Vijnāptih**Submissive Prayer or Pleas**

As with the prayers we described in limb number (26) (offering prayers), the prayers in this limb of bhakti must be full of humility, however, if done with the right mood, some pleas for oneself are a part of this practice. This aspect is described by Śrīla Gurudeva:

To describe one's miserable condition, deceitfulness, attachment to material existence, helplessness, and so on, and to pray in a despairing voice for deliverance and attainment of service to the Lord's lotus feet is called submissive prayer.

These prayers have been divided into three categories: (1) whole hearted prayers for spiritual growth, (2) disclosing one's insignificance and worthlessness, and (3) yearning for or expressing one's strong desire for the Lord's personal service. Examples of each have been given as follows.

(1) Wholehearted prayers for spiritual growth:

O my lord, as young boys and girls develop natural affection and attachment for each other, please let my mind be attached to You.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains why this example is given.

The example is very appropriate. When a young boy or girl sees a member of the opposite sex there is a natural attraction, without need for any introduction. Without any training, there is a natural attraction due to the sex impulse. This is a material example, but the devotee is praying that he may develop a similar spontaneous attachment for the Supreme Lord, free from any desire for profit and without any other cause. This natural attraction for the Lord is the perfectional stage of self-realization.

We ask you to reread this last quote and ask Śrī guru to help you develop an understanding of it. Because it nicely expresses a very deep truth that we hope to share with you.

The “spontaneous attachment” that Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks of is the root sentiment of the purer level of bhakti, rāgānuga. Our attachment to the Lord should be based upon a natural attraction and affection. We are not to love Him because of what He can provide for us or because of His power and authority.

The use of “young” boys and girls in this example is on point because at an early age we have no training. Our affection arises of its own accord and this prayer, by this example, asks the Lord to awaken the pure love that we all have for him.

We should also note that Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to this natural attraction as a “perfectional stage”. By this, he shows us that the path of rāgānuga bhakti and the moods that drive it are the goals that we all seeking to achieve.

(2) Disclosing one's insignificance and worthlessness:

The prayer we are given to express this mood comes to us from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

O Supreme Lord, in this world there is no sinner and offender like me. Even though You are an ocean of causeless mercy, I am ashamed even to request You to forgive my offenses. What more shall I say?

In explaining this example, Śrīla Prabhupāda points out that the aspect of being ashamed of our sins and offenses is very important. He tells us that our mood makes no sense and is even offensive if we admit our faults, but due to a lack of shame, we simply commit these acts again in the future. We must be humble. We must openly admit our faults and our mistakes, and, out of shame, we must be truly committed to avoiding future failures as well.

(3) Yearning for or expressing one's strong desire for the Lords personal service:

The Vedas provide us with an example of this type of prayer:

My dear Lord, when shall that day come when you will ask me to fan Your body, and, according to Your pleasure, You will say, “Just fan me in this way.”?

In commenting on this prayer, Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us:

The idea in this verse is that the devotee is desiring to personally fan the body of the Supreme Personality of God. That means that he is desiring to become the personal associate of the Supreme Lord. Of course, any devotee, in any capacity, either as servant, friend, or conjugal lover always has direct association with the Lord. But according to his different individual taste, a person has a desire for just one of these relationships.

The type of relationship we desire is determined by our original personality and identity (our svarūpa). It is not a product of the mind or of our material intelligence or imagination. As we purify ourselves, we will develop a natural taste for one of these relationships.

In the early stages of our journey to prema such prayers for specific services may instead be more general, where we pray for

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

Staple an awakening of our higher levels of consciousness, and yet, at all stages, it is the intensity of our yearning, the strength of our desire for spiritual growth or perfection that is most important.

In these lessons, we have used the word “greed” to express these yearnings or strong desires. This word is also used by our ācāryas, so it is perfectly fit, but still, we should never mistake this with material, self-centered greed. This difference is expressed by Śrīla Prabhupāda who explains *“This desiring some perfectional stage in spiritual life is not sense gratification.”*

In another prayer from the Vedas, yearning to be able to cry because of one’s strong desire for some perfectional stage is expressed.

My dear Lord, O lotus-eyed one, when will that day come when, on the bank of the holy river Yamunā, I shall become just like a madman, with tears continuously flowing from my eyes as I chant Your Holy Names?

The value of such tears is explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

One should learn how to cry for the Lord. One should learn this small technique, and he should be very eager and actually cry to become engaged in some particular type of service. This is called excessive eagerness or greed and such tears are the price for the highest perfection. If one develops this excessive eagerness for meeting and serving the Lord in a particular way, that is the price to enter the kingdom of God. Otherwise, there is no material calculation for the value of the ticket by which one can enter the kingdom of God. The only price for such entrance is desire and great eagerness.

Before you move on, we ask you to re-read, study, and contemplate this last quote. In these lessons, we have repeatedly spoken about motive, telling you that even acts which appear to be proper or spiritual can be degraded if they are performed with an improper motive, and this standard even applies to tears. There are some who will imitate such tears to try to show that they are spiritually advanced, but doing so will not give the valuable results mentioned in this quote, these false tears will not purchase a ticket to the kingdom of God. On the other hand, real tears, that are motivated solely by an overwhelming desire to meet and serve the Lord in a way that is pleasing to Him, will purchase this ticket for us.

We should search our hearts for this strong desire because it resides in every one of us. We may think we desire the illusions of this world, but **the only thing we really desire is to meet the Lord and serve Him in a particular way.** This is because the real us, our svarūpa, is solely designed to engage in this service, and discovering this longing, this greed for this service will automatically bring on truly heartfelt tears. When we reach the point where we feel that we cannot go on without this service, when we cry to meet the Lord and personally serve Him, we will have attained our ticket to the kingdom of God.

We can also note, that in this prayer, these tears are directly related to the chanting of the Holy Names. In this regard, we remind you that when we chant the mahā-mantra, we are to call out in the very same mood of separation that will bring on these tears— *“O Hare, I love You! O Kṛṣṇa, I miss You! O Rāma, I can no longer go on without You!”*

When meeting and service to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is more important to us than any other goal, when our every thought, word, and deed are motivated by our desire to meet Them and attain Their direct service, when this greed dominates our entire consciousness, these tears, these tickets to the kingdom of God will automatically flow from our eyes, and we will ride the river of these tears all the way to Their lotus feet.

So, this is why the “complete” chanting of the Holy Names that we have spoken about must include spiritual emotions, and, if we know and consider this truth, we can easily understand why true and complete saṅkīrtana is known to be the most effective of

all the bhakti limbs, for our ticket to the service of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is contained within it.

(47) Tat-krpāpekṣanam

Anticipating the Mercy of the Lord

In previous lessons, we have shared the quote that is used to explain this limb of bhakti. In that quote, we are instructed to keep the mind at peace by always observing the mercy of the Lord in every event. Understanding that we have created our circumstances by our past actions, we are to offer our lives and our very selves to the Lord, no matter what we may face, while being assured that by doing so we will receive His supreme mercy in the form of the awakening of our prema for Him.

(48) Dhyānam-Meditation

We recently discussed this limb of bhakti with you, and, in doing so, we shared the story of the brahmāna whose meditation on the service of the Lord resulted in a burnt finger as he checked on the temperature of a sweet he had made for the Lord. Even though he had only meditated on this activity, the burning of his finger showed that the Lord accepted the mood of his offerings as equal to his having made a physical offering.

As we advance in our bhakti, this meditation, which is of course an aspect of remembrance (number 23) will play an increasing role in our practices.

(49) Nija-priya-vastu-samarpanam

Offering One’s Own Dear Objects

Whenever we receive an object that is very dear to us, we should first offer it to Kṛṣṇa before we accept it for our own use. We should do so with the understanding that, “This belongs to Kṛṣṇa. He is allowing me to use it in His service, but it it’s never truly mine.” This mood will protect us from the attachment and possessiveness of the false ego and help us to always remember that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is our sole provider and maintainer.

(50) Kṛṣṇārthe samasta-karma-karanam

Performing All Activities for the Sake of Kṛṣṇa

This limb involves the effort to make all our activities, be they related to our worldly duties or a part of our bhakti practices, favorable for the service of Kṛṣṇa. An example would be to give up a higher paying job and an expensive lifestyle to accept a job that require less of our time, thus allowing us to more fully engage in Kṛṣṇa’s service.

(51) Sarvathā-saranāpattiḥ

Full Self-surrender

Although this limb is like limb number (29), ātma-nivedana/self-surrender, a different example to explain this limb of bhakti is given here. The full self-surrender spoken of here is identical to the highly-developed faith we shared in Lesson 3. It consists of the following six symptoms:

- (1) *Accepting only what is favorable to bhakti;*
- (2) *Rejecting all that is unfavorable to bhakti;*
- (3) *Having no doubt that Kṛṣṇa is our only protector and that we cannot make spiritual progress by any other method than serving Him;*
- (4) *Having no doubt that Kṛṣṇa is our only maintainer;*
- (5) *Knowing that we are incapable of doing anything independently, that is, separate from the will and desire of Kṛṣṇa. This is expressed by the mood of, “Who am I? I am His. My duty is to fulfill His desires.”*
- (6) *Possession of deep humility. “I am wretched, insignificant, and materially destitute.”*

(52) Tulasī-sevā—Serving Tulasī

This limb was discussed with limb number (10). It is repeated here to stress the significance of tulasī, even over that of shade and fruit trees.

(53) Vaiṣṇava-śāstra-sevā

Serving Vaiṣṇava Scriptures

The type of scriptures included in this limb of bhakti, as well

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

as how they are to be served, is explained by Śrīla Gurudeva:

Only those śāstras that cause one to obtain and cultivate a desire to serve the Supreme Lord (bhāgavat-bhakti) are Vaiṣṇava-śāstras. One should faithfully and regularly study such scriptures, hear them from the mouths of pure devotees, and read and recite them with a worshipable attitude. One should know that bhakti is what is to be obtained from such scriptures and have full faith that one should mold one's life in accordance with their principles.

The restoration of, careful keeping of, as well as the publishing and propagation of these śāstras are all included in this limb of serving the scriptures.

The Vedas further tell us:

Those who hear Vaiṣṇava-śāstras from the mouths of pure devotees and who regularly study them on their own are truly blessed in this world. Śrī Kṛṣṇa becomes pleased with them... Those who taste the nectar of these śāstras will have no taste for any other literature.

By these quotes, we can see why we have recommended the re-reading and serious study of these lessons. As they contain the quotes of the śāstras and our ācāryas, and as they aim to cultivate our bhakti, we can obtain these benefits from these lessons as well. We should feel truly blessed to have them for our study, we should be pleased to be pleasing Kṛṣṇa, and be extremely glad that through these śāstras our taste for material literatures will disappear, leaving only our original and pure taste for those works which will lead us to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

(54) Mathurā-mandale vāsaḥ

Residing within the District of Mathura

The district of Mathurā is where Śrī Kṛṣṇa carried out His early pastimes when He was on this planet some 5000 years ago. We should hear about, remember, and glorify this district as well as the specific places of His pastimes that He had within it. By desiring to go to Mathurā, seeing or touching the land there, or by living there, the desires of bhakti are fulfilled. And, even if we are unable to physically reside there, we can do so mentally by remembering this holy land.

(55) Vaiṣṇava-sevanam

Service of the Vaiṣṇava's

Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches us:

O Arjuna, those who claim to be My devotees are not My actual devotees. But those who say they are devotees of My devotees, are My true devotees.

The Vedas state;

How wonderful it is that men become purified simply by seeing, touching, washing the feet of, offering a sitting place to, and serving Vaiṣṇavas, for even by merely remembering them, one's household becomes sanctified.

Śrīla Gurudeva explains:

Vaiṣṇavas are very dear to the Lord. By rendering service to the Vaiṣṇavas one obtains bhakti towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

These are profound truths and wonderful glories of this limb of bhakti. Knowing these truths, you may wish to go back to restudy our "Guide to Vaiṣṇava Holy Days" and you may wish to be sure to include the worship and remembrance of the Vaiṣṇavas in your daily practices.

(56) Yathā-śakti dolādi-mahotsava-karanam

Celebration of Festivals Related to the Lord

In Accordance with One's Ability

The holding and celebration of festivals is a natural part of us. While most will concentrate on celebrating their own birthdays, New Year's Eve, and so on, proper festivals should be centered on the Lord, His devotees, and their activities. When the festivals arrive, we should collect and donate articles to the best of our ability and we should celebrate these days with others.

We will also note that our inmate contributor has shared that he tries to overcome the challenges of conducting these celebrations in a prison setting by at least making the effort to

remember them when they take place, and, when he can, he obtains some small items like candies, offers them to the person whose special day it is, and then distributes them to others. In this way, he at least tries, per his own ability, to celebrate these holy days.

(57) Kārttika-vratam

Observing the Vow of Kārttika

Kārttika is a very special month in the Vaiṣṇava year. During this time, specific prayers are said in honor and glorification of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. While the form of Kṛṣṇa as a baby, and a pastime with His mother, Yaśoda, is given special attention, the glories of Śrī Rādhā, and a similar pastime with Kṛṣṇa in His blossoming youth is also focused on. To worship Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa by observing the limbs of bhakti in a regulated manner during this month is known to be a method by which we can show our respect for Śrī Rādhā.

The significance of this month is also shown by the fact that we receive extra benefits for those bhakti practices performed during it. The Vedas state:

As the Supreme Lord, Śrī Dāmodara (He who was tied about the waist) is famous in this world for being very affectionate to His devotees, during this month of Dāmodara (another name for Kārtika), which is dear to Him, He considers even very little spiritual practices to be very great, and thus He bestows tremendous results.

In our monthly newsletters, we will always make you aware of this special month and encourage you to make efforts to practice as much bhakti as you can during it.

(58) Sarvadā harināma-grahanam janmāṣṭamī yatrādikam ca

To Chant the Holy Names at All Times and

Celebrate Janmāṣṭamī and Other Festivals

Both of these limbs of bhakti have already been given. They are repeated here for emphasis. Janmāṣṭamī is the appearance day of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

(59) Vaiṣṇava-cihna-dhāranam

Adopting the Outward Signs of a Vaiṣṇava

In the paintings and photographs we see of the Vaiṣṇavas in our line, we will find the outward signs of a Vaiṣṇava displayed. The two most prominent of these is the wearing of a necklace of tulasī beads and the tilaka that, while worn in twelve places on the body, is most visible on the forehead. While neck beads made of other substances are also mentioned in the Vedas, Śrīla Gurudeva tells us:

For the Vaiṣṇavas, however, the wearing of a necklace of tulasī is the best of all. Tulasī is supremely pure and very dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, by wearing a necklace of tulasī, the body, mind, words, and soul become pure, and the inclination towards bhakti begins to manifest spontaneously.

The tilaka worn by the Vaiṣṇavas consists of two vertical lines on the forehead, which come together at the top of the bridge of the nose, and then form a small, leaf shaped marking. They are applied to twelve parts of the body, with a specific mantra that includes one of the Lord's names spoken during their application.

The clay used in making tilaka is produced in or gathered from holy sites, from places where tulasī is grown, and so on. It is then mixed with holy water to form a moist paste. Since the Vedas and Kṛṣṇa Himself both function per time, place, and circumstance, in a situation where these substances are not available, one may even simply use water to apply these markings. Additionally, since all the Lord's names are included within the mahā-mantra, the recitation of it can be used in place of the twelve individual mantras.

Tilaka is applied in the mornings, after one has bathed, and may be reapplied later in the day as well. The Vedas tell us that we should apply tilaka before performing our other bhakti practices. They also inform us that we should not even see the body of a person who is not adorned with tilaka and that the body of such a person is compared to a crematorium. Of course, the

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

Staple

avoidance of all such persons is almost impossible in daily life, but these statements stress the importance of both giving up the association of worldly minded people and staying in the association of Vaiṣṇavas.

The Vedas tell us that the wearing of tilaka multiplies the results of our spiritual activities millions of times. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is pleased by our wearing of tilaka and thus it assists in the growth of our bhakti. Even if our bhakti is performed without proper purificatory rites, without the chanting of mantras, without proper faith, or at improper times, they will produce permanent results simply by wearing tilaka on the forehead.

Having shared these wonderful qualities of wearing tilaka with you, we would be remiss if we did not also share the twelve places where is applied and the order of application. We will also share the mantra for each location and a mantra for sanctifying water, thus turning it into the holy water of sacred rivers, but again, we mention that for those of you who struggle to pronounce these mantras, which can be especially difficult when we do not have the opportunity to hear them spoken, the use of the mahā-mantra will suffice in all cases.

Mantra for Calling the Holy Rivers

*gaṅge ca yamune caiva godāvari sarasvati
narmade sindho kāveri jale 'smin sannidhiṁ kuru*

Mantras for Applying Tilaka

After pouring a little water into the palm of the left hand, one can recite the above mantra to sanctify this water. Then one should rub the sacred clay into it, forming a thin paste. One then applies the tilaka with the top portion of the right ring finger, making markings on twelve parts of the body. The fingernail should not be used to clear the space in the middle, instead, a damp cloth placed over the tip of the finger should be used. Then the tilaka is applied to the body, the following mantras should be chanted, in the order shown.

The forehead—*om Keśavāya namaḥ*

The belly (above the navel)—*om Nārāyaṇāya namaḥ*

The chest—*om Mādhavāya namaḥ*

The throat—*om Govindāya namaḥ*

The right side—*om Viṣṇave namaḥ*

The right arm (below the shoulder)—*om Madhusūdanāya namaḥ*

The right shoulder—*om Trivikramāya namaḥ*

The left side—*om Vāmanāya namaḥ*

The left arm—*om Śrīdhārāya namaḥ*

The left shoulder—*om Hṛṣikeśāya namaḥ*

The upper back—*om Padmanābhāya namaḥ*

The lower back—*om Dāmodarāya namaḥ*

Finally, after washing one's hand, whatever water is left should be wiped on the top of the head in the region of the sikha (small circular tuft of hair, left unshaven in the upper-rear center of the head) while chanting the mantra:

Om Vasudevaya namaḥ.

The Five Most Excellent Limbs of Bhakti

The final five limbs given in most lists are all repeats or specializations of earlier mentioned practices. In the Vedas, such repetition is used to signal importance and significance. In fact, Lord Caitanya Himself glorifies these five limbs in this way:

These five limbs of bhakti are the best of all. Even a slight performance of these five awakens prema for Kṛṣṇa. The power of these five practices is very wonderful and difficult to understand. Even without faith in them, a person who is without offense can awaken his bhakti, a person who is offenseless can awaken his dormant prema for Kṛṣṇa simply by being a little connected to them. (C.C. Madhya 22.129, 133)

Keeping these truths in our heart, let's examine these limbs that awaken our prema.

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

(60) Śraddhā-pūvaka-śrī-mūrti-sevā Serving the Deity with Faith

Although the statements of Lord Caitanya that we just shared with you confirm that this limb of bhakti is effective even if it is performed without faith, the inclusion of the term “serving with faith” is appropriate here because it points out the extra significance of faith in practicing this limb of bhakti.

In lesson 16, when we introduced you to arcana (Deity worship), we told you that some people worship the Deity without faith in the fact that the Deity is a full and complete manifestation of the Lord, seeing Him instead as merely a representation of the Lord that is constructed of material elements. These types of worshippers lack the faith mentioned here, and, even though this level of worship will lead to prema, our progress will be slower than if we develop faith in the reality that the Deity is Kṛṣṇa Himself.

Along with this faith, our ācāryas tell us that this limb of bhakti includes worship that is filled with both enthusiasm and that is saturated with love. We must not be lazy or uncaring. We must be eager to serve the Deity and our motive should be our all-encompassing love for Him.

(61) Rasikah saha śrī-bhāgavatārthāsvādah Tasting the Meaning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam In the Association of Rasika Vaiṣṇavas

The Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is the great work written by the sādhu who compiled the Vedas some 5000 years ago. In this book, the glories of bhakti and the pastimes of the Lord are focused upon. It is known to be the cream that rose to the top of the Vedas, and it is the wish-fulfilling tree of the Vedas as well.

The instruction given in this limb, to taste/hear this work in the association of rasika Vaiṣṇavas is significant. The term “*rasa*” + *rus* (like rust) is complex in meaning. Translated in various ways, it refers to **the pleasures one experiences when tasting the emotions that arise from a love-drenched relationship with Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa**. It is only by hearing the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam from a pure devotee who can taste this rasa that we will be able to experience these moods ourselves. This is a truth that is based upon the principle of “one cannot give what he himself does not possess.” The pure bhakti that leads to the tasting of rasa will not arise if we hear Śrīmad Bhāgavatam from ordinary people, and this is especially true of those who recite this great work as a means of livelihood or to draw the praise and admiration of others.

(62) Sajātivā-snigdha-mahattrā-sādhu-saṅgah Associating with Like-minded, Affectionate Sādhus Who Are More Advanced than Oneself

At this point in this course, you should be well aware of the value and importance of associating with sādhus. Śrīla Gurudeva explains:

As a crystal reflects the color of those objects which are brought into its proximity, a person's nature will be exactly in accordance with the association he keeps. Therefore, by associating with pure devotees, one becomes pure. Sādhu-saṅga is beneficial in every way.

While we have done our best to convey our need to associate with sādhus to you, here, in this limb of bhakti, we receive even more specific details about the type of sādhus we are to associate with.

All Vaiṣṇavas are not in the line of Lord Caitanya. The Vedas teach us that there are four bona fide lines of Vaiṣṇavas, with each started by a different guru. Of course, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original guru of all lines, but these four are credited as beginning the four bona fide lines.

In this limb, we find that we are to associate with “like-minded” Vaiṣṇavas. This truth is also worded as associating with “those who are of the same spiritual disposition.” To understand what this means we should be aware that not all Vaiṣṇavas worship Śrīla Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as their supreme Deities.

In one of the Vaiṣṇava lines, Lord Nṛsiṃha + Nṛ-sing-huh, the half-man half-lion form of the Lord is the chief Deity. In another line, the opulent, “thunder” form of the Lord, the four-handed Lord Nārāyaṇa and His female consort Śrī Lakṣmī, take precedence. In the line that Lord Caitanya took His initiation in, Lord Kṛṣṇa in His baby form was at one time worshipped, but since the appearance of Lord Caitanya, the worship of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa has been established as supreme. In the fourth line, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are also worshipped as well, but other forms can also be worshipped.

The worship of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa was encouraged and preferred by Lord Caitanya, so much so that He would even convert Vaiṣṇavas who worshipped other forms of the Lord to the worship of the Divine Couple. And yet, we still find that even within His close associates, there were those who chose to worship other forms. For example, the Lord’s form as a great warrior king along with His wife Sita Devī, were worshipped by some of His associates and their dedication was so intense that they were unable to change their allegiance even upon the suggestion of Lord Caitanya.

The reason for these various tastes in the chosen Deity of true Vaiṣṇavas is that in their svarūpa, in their original personalities and identities, are worshippers and servants of these various forms of the Lord, and, as they were very pure and advanced in their devotion, they knew in their hearts that their love was already placed at the lotus feet of their own form of the Lord and that they could never fully place it elsewhere.

So, this consideration, that we should follow a sādhu who worships the same form of the Lord that we are attracted toward, is the first aspect of what is meant by associating with like-minded sādhus.

We can admittedly say that this course is clearly prepared with a focus upon Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as the supreme Deities. This is because Lord Caitanya, Śrīla Gurudeva, his dīkṣā guru, and all of the Vaiṣṇavas we have quoted from in this course are all worshippers and servants of Śrīla Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. This is not to say that it is impossible for some of you to have a svarūpa that will incline you toward the worship of different form of the Lord, but as followers of our ācāryas, the presentation of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as supreme is proper and fully in keeping with the works of the gurus in our line.

Even having said all that, we should not think that no other form(s) of the Lord is/are worshipped in our line. For example, when Śrīla Prabhupāda came to the West, he established the Deities of Lord Jagannātha (the Lord of the universe), His brother, Lord Baladeva, and His sister Subhadra. There are also temples where Kṛṣṇa is worshipped without Śrī Rādhā, but the focus in our line is on Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Beyond this, there is another aspect of what is meant by like-minded sādhus. As we advance, and as we become more aware of our svarūpa, we will become attracted toward a specific type of relationship with the Lord, namely; that of a fully submissive servant; that of a friend who, being unaware of the supremacy of the Lord, accepts Him as an equal; that of a guardian with the mood of being Kṛṣṇa’s protector and maintainer; or that of a female admirer. This limb of bhakti instructs us to associate with sādhus who have the same relationship with the Lord that we are attracted to. Having said that, there is another consideration that includes additional truths as well. Each of the above-mentioned relationships progresses in its level of intimacy and the moods of each of the lower forms are included within the higher. The mood of wanting to fulfill Kṛṣṇa’s every desire that is possessed by those with a servant relationship is also possessed by His friends. The servant mood, as well as the mood that Kṛṣṇa is not superior, are both contained within the guardian mood, and, in fact, His guardians go beyond this to feel superior to Him. And these moods are possessed by His female admirers, the gopīs, the cowherd maidens of Vṛndāvana.

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

We should also note that even within each of these relationships there is infinite variety. Some of His friends feel more like servants, some like total equals, and some have moods of protecting Him mixed with their friendship. Therefore, as we progress and our svarūpa is revealed, our selection of those sādhus who are like-minded will be even more specific.

Another aspect of this progressive depth of relationships is that those sādhus who are steeped in the mood of the gopīs, more specifically, in the mood of being the servants of Śrī Rādhā, is that they can act as guru for those in any of these moods or relationships due to their being at the highest level. This truth is brought out by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura in his masterpiece “Jaiva Dharma”. In this book, we find a guru who is himself situated in the mood of a gopī, acting as the guru for a disciple who is situated as a friend of Kṛṣṇa. With these truths in mind, we find that these most exalted forms of Śrī guru can act as instructors for all.

Summing up the teaching of associating with like-minded sādhus we can say that we should try to hear from and take instruction from sādhus who both worship the form of the Lord as we do and are established in the same relationship as we aspire for, leaving room for taking instruction from those who have a more developed and intimate relationship.

The instruction to associate with affectionate sādhus is explained by Śrīla Gurudeva:

One should associate with those sādhus who are affectionately disposed to oneself. This refers to those who are affectionate, well-wishing and able to taste the pleasures of their relationship with Kṛṣṇa (rasika). It does not refer to those who are harsh, unsympathetic or indifferent. The esoteric (hidden) mysteries of deep mediational service and worship (bhajana) and genuine instruction regarding the method of performing bhajana cannot be obtained from sādhus who are indifferently disposed or not affectionate. Therefore, to associate with saintly devotees who are soft-hearted and affectionate is of the greatest utility.

Śrīla Gurudeva also tells us that even though a devotee may be both like-minded and affectionate, *we should associate with those devotees who are more advanced in terms of steadiness in bhajana, direct experience, and realization of the Lord, and in knowing the confidential mysteries of the śāstras—in other words, who are superior to oneself in all respects.*

By associating with those possessing all of the above-mentioned qualities a practitioner can make steady and gradual advancement on his path.

Our final note on this limb of bhakti is that these truths do not teach us to give up the association of other devotees who do not yet possess these qualities. In fact, we are to associate even with those who are situated in both lower stages of their advancement and those who are equal to us as well. We are to provide support, guidance and friendship, to the best of our ability, to all who are walking the bhakti path. But here, in this limb of bhakti, the association being spoken of refers chiefly to those we are to take instructions from, serve, and emulate in their behavior.

(63) Nāma-sankīrtanam

Loud Congregational Chanting of the Holy Names

In Lesson 1 of this course, we told you the number one rule of bhakti—always remember Kṛṣṇa. Since then, we’ve shared the mahā-mantra with you (look down!) and we’ve spoken repeatedly about the power of the Holy Names. We’ve also tied the remembrance of Kṛṣṇa together with chanting His names, telling you that one of the most wonderful qualities of chanting is that it causes us to also remember the Lord.

We’ve also shared many truths about the mind and the other senses, talking about the need to control them and how they generally chase after the temporary so-called pleasures of this world. In this next quote, **the Vedas** bring all these teachings

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together in a very clear and wonderful way.

Remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who destroys all sins, is accomplished with great endeavor, for it is very difficult to withdraw the mind from the unlimited varieties of worldly sense objects and concentrate it upon the Lord. But Śrī kīrtana is easily accomplished simply by vibrating the lips. Therefore, it is superior and more effective than the process of remembrance.

These truths are further expressed in this teaching from the Vedas.

[The Lord's associates in Vaikuntha (the spiritual planets) said:] In our opinion, kīrtana is superior to remembrance, which manifests only in the mind, which is by nature unsteady. Kīrtana, however, manifests on the tongue and vocal organs, and automatically creates an impression on the mind. In the end, the sound of kīrtana not only satisfies the sense of hearing, but it pleases all those who hear it, just as it pleases one's self.

The meditation conducted by so many people is generally conducted in silence. Misunderstanding the nature of the mind, many feel that there is some benefit or some reason to try to silence the mind, and, as part of this, maintaining silence during meditation is practiced. This misguided technique is never found in the practices of those who are properly situated on the bhakti path.

Even the remembrance of the Lord and meditation on Him, or upon serving and worshipping Him, which are among the sixty-four limbs of bhakti, are done while chanting the Holy Names. In mentioning a point, we made earlier, one of our founding fathers Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī teaches us:

In Kali-yuga, if another limb of bhakti is performed, it must be accompanied by nāma-saṅkīrtana.

The glories of chanting the Holy Names is expressed by another of our founding fathers, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī:

Although there are many ways to glorify Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the chanting of the Holy Names is foremost. This is because nāma-saṅkīrtana has the power to easily manifest the wealth of prema. Therefore, in the opinion of all, kīrtana is the best process. The happiness that is obtained by the tongue that incessantly tastes the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's names with heartfelt love is beyond comparison. Who can describe its greatness?

Finally, to close out these glorious descriptions on the truths of saṅkīrtana we will share a quote which speaks to the mysterious and special position that Śrī Rādhā holds in the teachings of Lord Caitanya. By seeking the mercy of Śrī guru and bringing truths like these into our hearts, the topmost essences of the science of bhakti-yoga will be revealed to us.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself teaches us:

Rādhā's name is superior to hundreds of My names. In other words, chanting Śrī Rādhā's name just once is far superior to chanting My names hundreds of times. Even I do not know what benefit awaits that person who always chants and remembers Śrī Rādhā.

(64) Śrī - Vṛndāvana vāśah Residing in Śrī Vṛndāvana

Residing within the district of Mathurā was mentioned as limb number (54), and while Vṛndāvana is within this district, we find a special mention of residence there as one of the five most excellent limbs of bhakti. While we have yet to share a lot of the innumerable glories of Vṛndāvana with you, we have told you that is here that Śrī Kṛṣṇa carries out His youthful pastimes, and this is, in and of itself, the reason for its glories. The reason we wish to reside there is described by Śrīla Gurudeva:

By residing there and performing sādhanā and bhajana, those on the bhakti path (sādhakas) may easily obtain manifestation of these transcendental pastimes within their hearts.

As we want to begin to share more of these pastimes, and thus the glories of Vṛndāvana with you, we are now going to include a

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

prayer by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī that was written for these very reasons.

Śrī Vṛndāvanāṣṭakam Eight Verses in Praise of Śrī Vṛndāvana

(1) *I do not want to achieve mystic powers, impersonal liberation, residence in Vaikuntha as an eternal associate of Nārāyaṇa, nor do I want the type of prema experienced by the residents there. I only want to live in Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhama, because there I can easily attain the service of the Divine Youthful Couple, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, especially the service of my most worshipable Śrī Rādhā.*

(2) *Upon seeing the profuse sweetness of Śrī Vṛndāvana, even Brahmā, who, as the first being in every universe also acts as the guru for each universe, and Uddhava, the crown-jewel of exalted devotees, prayed to take birth there as blades of grass. May Vṛndāvana always be my residence.*

(3) *[Śrī Kṛṣṇa, using the enchanting melody of His flute, calls the gopīs to dance with Him in the forest at night, and] when Śrī Kṛṣṇa vanished from their presence during this pastime, the gopīs prayed, "O Mother Earth! What unprecedented austerities did you perform to receive the touch of Kṛṣṇa's feet upon your surface in Vṛndāvana? Feeling goose-bumps, your grasses are standing upright!" May I always reside in Śrī Vṛndāvana, which is marked with Kṛṣṇa's footprints.*

(4) *Vṛndāvana is that place where the loving attachment of the gopīs is predominant, and within that loving attachment, the pleasure that arise from a relationship, with Śrī Kṛṣṇa (rasa) reaches its pinnacle. The scriptures declare: Without question Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of rasa. For this reason, I want to live in Śrī Vṛndāvana.*

(5) *Although Śrī Vṛndāvana is limitless, due to the presence of Govardhana hill [which Śrī Kṛṣṇa lifted with the pinky of His left hand to create an umbrella for the residents of Vṛndāvana in order to protect them from a violent storm], and the presence of the place where the rāsa-līlā [the pastime of Kṛṣṇa dancing with the gopīs], it is known to have three borders, and to be five yojanas (a distance of eight miles) in diameter. May I always reside in Śrī Vṛndāvana.*

(6) *May I always reside in Śrī Vṛndāvana, who is supremely glorious with Śrī Rādhā as queen. It is my long-cherished hope to receive the mercy of that Vṛndāvana, who bestows the happiness of prema for Śrī Kṛṣṇa upon her devotees.*

(7) *The renowned pastime of the rasa dance, which even Lord Nārāyaṇa's wife, Śrī Lakṣmī-devī could not gain entrance into although she performed varieties of penances to gain this opportunity, is enacted eternally in Vṛndāvana, and is even going on today. Therefore, may I always reside in Śrī Vṛndāvana and serve in her multitudes of splendid enchanting pleasure-groves.*

(8) *May I always reside in that Śrī Vṛndāvana where varieties of deer fearlessly play, where cuckoos, bumblebees, parrots and many other kinds of birds sing, and where many types of peacock's dance.*

(9) *Those with a fixed, sober mind who loudly recite these eight verses in glorification of Śrī Vṛndāvana in a mood of deep meditation will, at the end of this very life, attain the direct service of the lotus feet of the king and queen of Śrī Vṛndāvana, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.*

Two More Limbs of Bhakti

The sixty-four limbs discussed above came from a list compiled by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, however, when Lord Caitanya spoke His list, He gave only sixty limbs, two of which are not included above. Therefore, to share the complete combination of these lists, we'll also share these two more limbs of bhakti with you.

(65) Hāni-lābhe sama Treating Loss and Gain Equally

This limb can easily be a part of limb number (16), giving up lamentation, anger, and so on, however, in his translation of Lord Caitanya's list, Śrīla Prabhupāda has divided this into a separate limb.

There is little need for explanation here as the meaning is quite clear. Perhaps the most devotional consideration will be to analyze the reasoning's we use to reach this steady state of mind. In this regard, we can understand that maintaining equality in both loss and gain requires an advanced state of detachment, which is surely a good attitude, however, we are also told that detachment itself is not a distinct quality of bhakti and that we are not to cultivate detachment separate from bhakti.

Considering these truths, this limb of bhakti is more related to limb (47), seeing or anticipating the mercy of the Lord in every event, for this limb focuses on complete dependence on the Lord and accepting every event as an expression of His mercy.

(66) Grāmya-vārta nā śuniba

Avoiding the Hearing of Material Talks

In translating this limb of bhakti, Śrīla Prabhupāda has said: *The devotee should avoid hearing or reading newspapers or mundane books that contain stories of love affairs between men and women or subjects palatable to the senses.*

This limb is giving in the second set of ten limbs, being those activities that we are to avoid or give up entirely. In this course, we have mentioned these same topics in various ways, most specifically in regard to the watching of television and the reading of novels.

There is only so much time in each day, and the mind is sure to dwell mostly upon those topics that we focus it on. Knowing that our thoughts and state of mind at the time of leaving our body will determine the destination of our soul, we should need no other reason to avoid those activities that cause the mind to focus on and become attached to the illusions of this world.

Having shared these limbs of bhakti with you, we humbly request you to study them and find those that you are attracted to engaging your time in. Our ācāryas tell us that each of us will have our own individual tastes and they encourage us to engage in those limbs that are attractive to us. In this light, we can also share a powerful truth given to us by the Lord Himself as He completed His list of these limbs of bhakti. **Lord Caitanya** teaches us:

One who practices bhakti with sincere and steady faith will awaken the waves of prema, whether he executes one or many of the limbs of bhakti.

Please take these teachings to heart and become devoted to awakening your prema.

The Qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa

For the remainder of this lesson, we will begin to discuss the qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with you. In past lessons, we have also shared many of these with you, and we will now enter a very detailed and in-depth study of these qualities. As this is an extensive subject, we will not be able to complete it in this lesson, so we will continue in a later lesson as well.

The Sanskrit word for quality is "guna." As we've shared, the development of our meditations on Kṛṣṇa is to begin with His names(s)/nāma, then His form(s)/rūpa, then His qualities/guna, and then His pastimes/līlā and associates/parikara.

When it comes to His qualities, there are two types—His qualities of majesty or opulence and His qualities of sweetness. If our original, pure personality and mood (our svarūpa) is that of a servant of Lord Nārāyaṇa, the four-handed form of the Lord, or one of His other opulent and majestic forms, we will be particularly attracted to the qualities that accompany these forms. If, however, our svarūpa is that of a servant of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, we will have no real taste for His majestic qualities, for our entire consciousness will be absorbed in love for His sweetness.

As we walk the bhakti path and begin to awaken the prema of our svarūpa, we are wise to start our studies by first learning about Kṛṣṇa's position as **THE ALMIGHTY GOD**. This is because we may become offensive and create obstacles in our path if we are not aware of the fact that, as God, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is never subject to our own ideas of what is right or what is wrong and thus we cannot ever act as a judge of His actions.

Everything Kṛṣṇa does is perfect. We must be aware of this. When He engages in pastimes that may seem to be inappropriate or based on material lust or other negative qualities, our awareness of Him as the almighty God can protect us from judging Him by our own limited understandings.

Having shared these truths, we will now spend some time focusing on the opulence, power, and majesty of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, thus allowing you to study and absorb these protective truths into your heart.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa - THE ALMIGHTY GOD

The Vedas are full of descriptions of Kṛṣṇa as the almighty God. In many of these, He is referred to by His other names, with His name "Viṣṇu" being used quite often. Of course, all of these names refer to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, for there is only one Supreme Lord. This is a point we made way back in Lesson 1 when we talked about the many names and nicknames a person can have.

The Bhagavad Gītā is one of the Vedic sources that describe the majestic powers of the Lord, and, since the verses there are all specifically describing Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, we will rely on these to share a few drops from the ocean of His opulence's with you.

In the tenth chapter of the Gītā, **Śrī Kṛṣṇa lists** many of His qualities, telling us:

I am the original cause in every respect...Among mortals, only those who know Me as unborn, beginningless, and the Supreme Controller of all the worlds is free from illusion and fully freed from all sins. All of the great sages and the progenitors of mankind in every age are born from My Viṣṇu form, through the will of My own mind. He who factually knows all of My opulence's and the principles of bhakti-yoga becomes endowed with unwavering knowledge of Me. Of this there is no doubt. (B.G. 10. 2-7)

We can pause here to take note of a few critical truths. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us that **only those who know Him as the Supreme Controller are free from illusion**. Therefore, at least early on in our bhakti, we must recognize Him as such, for this will free us from the illusions of judging Him by worldly standards. This point is reconfirmed when He tells us we must know of His opulence's and the principles of bhakti-yoga to attain the "unwavering knowledge" that will allow us to never question His activities or His ultimate position of supreme righteousness.

The next four verses of chapter 10 in the Gītā are known to be the heart and soul of the entire work. With this truth in mind, we will share each as an individual verse, letting you know that great benefit is achieved by deep study, contemplation, and even memorization of these four verses. **Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches** us:

I am the source of all creation, both material and spiritual. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who fully know these truths about Me, serve Me and deeply meditate upon Me with spiritual emotions (bhāvas) in their hearts. (B.G. 10.8)

Those who absorb their minds in Me, and who wholeheartedly devote their lives to My service, derive great satisfaction and bliss from constantly enlightening one another about the fundamental truths (tattvas) concerning Me and by performing kīrtana of My name, form, qualities and pastimes. (B.G. 10.9)

Great truths about this verse are revealed by **our ācāryas**. They tell us that **the devotees described in this verse cannot even maintain their lives without the service of and discussions about Śrī Kṛṣṇa**, just as a person cannot maintain his life without food. They also tell us by contemplating their

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

Staple future stage of perfection, the direct service of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, they derive great satisfaction and bliss even during this lifetime. In this regard, they inform us that this verse is exclusive to those who are attracted to the sweet aspect of the Lord through rāgānuga-bhakti, which is a subject we will again discuss as we explore the qualities (gunas) of the Lord.

To those who worship Me with love while yearning to eternally associate with Me. I give the spiritual knowledge and understandings by which they can attain Me. (B.G. 10.10)

It is only by showing My special compassion for these love filled devotees who yearn to be with Me, that I, who reside within them, use the blazing lamp of spiritual knowledge to destroy to destroy the darkness of material existence which arises from the ignorance that begins with their forgetfulness of Me. (B.G. 10.11)

Our ācāryas point out that the knowledge given to these loving devotees is superior to all other forms of knowledge because it is born from the service attitudes of bhakti. It is only by this special form of knowledge that we can attain realizations of the fact that Kṛṣṇa's sweet side is more relishable than His majestic one.

After these four verses, Kṛṣṇa's friend and devotee, **Arjuna** glorifies the Lord, calling Him **the Supreme Person, the creator of all beings, the God of gods, and the Master of the universe.**

Arjuna then asks Śrī Kṛṣṇa to list His mystic powers and opulence's so that he can know which of these he can meditate on.

In response, **Kṛṣṇa** says He will certainly honor His friends request, stating that **He will only list some of His prominent glories for there is no limit to them.** Kṛṣṇa then says:

Among the luminaries, I am the sun and among the stars I am the moon...Of the senses I am the mind, and I am the consciousness of all living beings...Among reservoirs of water I am the oceans...Among men I am the righteous king. Among weapons I am the thunderbolt and I am the God of love, who causes the procreation of all beings...Among chastiser's I am Yamarāja (the lord of death who sees to the punishment of all sinful jīvas) ...Of controller's I am time and among beast's I am the lion...Of that which is swift and purifying I am the wind...I am the creator, maintainer, and destroyer of all created objects. Of knowledge, I am knowledge of the soul, and in logical debate I am the philosophical principle that asserts the conclusive truth...among annihilators I am all-devouring time...I am death and I am birth...I am the might of the mighty...Of secrets I am silence and I am the wisdom of the wise...I am the original cause, the generating seed of all existence, and no entity, either moving or non-moving, can exist separately from me.

O Arjuna My divine opulence's are endless. What I have described to you is a mere indication of them. Know for certain that everything in existence that is opulent, majestic and empowered springs from just a small portion of My power.

But O Arjuna, what is the use of all this detailed knowledge? Just understand this: I pervade and sustain the entire material creation with just a single portion of Myself. (B.G. 10.19-42)

In Lesson 1, when we discussed the number one rule of bhakti—always remember Kṛṣṇa—we shared a portion of this list with you, and here, we have again left out parts of it because it contains many Sanskrit names and personalities that would be unfamiliar to you. And while this list was given in answer to Arjuna's question for how he could meditate on the Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa final instruction provides us with a hint that such meditations are not on the highest platform by asking Arjuna **“What is the use of all this detailed knowledge?”**

When we combine this question with the fact that He earlier said that He gives special knowledge to those who love Him and yearn to be with Him, we can see that these moods and motivations are superior to meditating on His opulence's.

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

Therefore, although we could refer to many more quotes from the Vedas that contain more and more descriptions and examples of the majestic qualities of the Lord, we will now shift our focus to those qualities that are especially dear to the Vaiṣṇavas in the line of Lord Caitanya.

Hiding Salt with Sugar

The young cowherd boy of Vṛndāvana is the original form of the Supreme Lord and thus He possesses more power and opulence than any of His other forms.

To illustrate this, we can show the examples of how, as a tiny child, Śrī Kṛṣṇa killed a variety of demons that had been sent to kill Him. One such demon took the form of a tornado, another of a giant snake, and others took the forms of a huge bird, a mad donkey, and a wild horse, but in every case, Kṛṣṇa easily killed them all.

He displayed His all-pervading position as well. Once, when accused of eating dirt, He wanted to prove His innocence. In doing so, He showed His mother the inside of His mouth, and when she looked there, she saw the entire material creation.

At the tender age of five, when Vṛndāvana was being threatened by a terrible storm, He lifted a mountain to provide an umbrella-like shelter for all the residents there, holding it aloft on the pinky of His left hand for seven full days.

So how, we may ask, do those who witness such feats fail to recognize Him as **THE ALMIGHTY GOD?**

We can use the example of sugar and salt, using salt to represent His power and sugar His sweetness.

If we take one cup of salt and mix in just a spoonful of sugar, and then we taste it, the salt will remain most noticeable. But if we mix even more salt, say two cups, with 100 pounds of sugar, the sugar/sweetness will dominate, even though there is more salt/power in the second mix.

So, this is like Kṛṣṇa in His other realms and in Vṛndāvana. Although He possesses more power in Vṛndāvana, His sweetness there is so great that His power cannot be noticed. To all the residents there, He is just a small, human-like boy, therefore, even when they witness the display of His powers, they simply attribute them to some other source.

For example, when He held the mountain aloft, some residents thought, “Perhaps He is God,” but when they approached His father with this idea he simply dismissed it saying, “The mountain is being held aloft by the Supreme Lord, and not by my son. Although He may appear to be doing so, He is not actually able to. The Supreme Lord, Śrī Nārāyaṇa is working through Him perhaps, but my son cannot be God. My boy is a rascal. He steals the butter from the homes of our neighbors and God would never transgress the laws in this way. He cries when He is hungry and He is entirely dependent upon His mother, does this sound like the position of the Supreme Lord?” This fully convinced the other residents and all thoughts of little Kṛṣṇa as God disappeared.

Similarly, His mother dismissed seeing the universes in His mouth as being caused by some other source, and each spectacular feat of His was accredited to another cause.

In explaining how this takes place, our ācāryas tell that Yogamaya, the spiritual side of the energy of illusions, creates thoughts that prevent Kṛṣṇa's direct associates in Vṛndāvana from seeing Him as God, in fact, it is this very quality that makes the relationships there so special and overwhelmingly sweet. While the descriptions of these purest, highest and sweetest qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are found throughout the Vedas, it is by the special mercy of the ācāryas in our line that His sweetness has been so elaborately described for us. This is because...

They're Here to Take Us Higher and Higher

The Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā is an amazing book of exalted spiritual truths. In just 700 verses it contains the foundations of bhakti-yoga while it also covers the major principles of karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga as well. And yet, those with knowledge of advanced teachings will tell you that it lacks a full explanation of

the highest spiritual truths. For example, the most worshippable personality for the direct associates of Lord Caitanya, Śrī Rādhā, is not even mentioned in the Gītā. For reasons, such as these, the Gītā is described as basic education for the Vaiṣṇavas.

On a higher level than the Gītā stands the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. This much larger work contains over 18,000 verses and it goes into much greater detail about the qualities of the Lord, even reaching into the realm of the pure sweetness that He displays in Śrī Vṇḍāvana. When properly explained and analyzed by our ācāryas, we find that it actually contains the moods of both Kṛṣṇa and His closest and most intimate associates, and yet, without this guidance, the highest and sweetest teachings of even this great work can easily go undetected because many of the truths it reveals are somewhat encoded. For example, Śrī Rādhā's name does not directly appear even in this higher-level work, it is only revealed in a hidden way.

Standing above the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta and the works of our founding fathers, the six gosvāmīs of Vṇḍāvana, as well as other ācāryas in our line. If the Gītā is compared to basic education, and the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam to high school teachings, then these works are college level and beyond, for in these books we find direct and vivid descriptions of the sweetness of both Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His beloved Śrī Rādhā as well.

Although these topmost books, especially the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta are the most advanced that we have, there is a special quality about them that has been noted by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, for he tells us that it is only through gaining an understanding of the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta that we will be able to enter into and fully grasp the hidden truths of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

As these books are accepted as manifestations of Śrī guru, and as our ācāryas also fulfill this position in our lives, we can see that various gurus appear in different forms and at different times, and that each teaches per the level of those listening and the level of teachings to be given, with the goal always being to bring us to higher and higher levels of realizations. In this regard, we can look at the teachings and histories of our two most recent ācāryas, Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Gurudeva.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda brought the teachings of the Vedas to the West, more specifically to New York city and then to the hippie infested San Francisco in the second half of the 1960's, he was preaching almost exclusively to those who had never even heard of Kṛṣṇa or any of the other truths of the Vedas. Therefore, although he was a pure devotee of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and fully aware of even the most exalted and intimate truths about the loving affairs of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs, the vast majority of his public speaking focused on much more basic truths, such as the preliminary teachings of the Gītā—You are not this body—You are a servant of God—Control the mind—Give up material attachments and pleasures—and so on.

This is not to say that he kept these higher truths hidden, for he also gave us a translation and commentary on the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, which contains the topmost truths, and yet, upon a close reading of it, we can see that he was still very cautious in his approach, providing regular warnings that we are not to dive into the ocean of these higher truths until we have laid a firm foundation of support and developed strong faith.

Later, when Śrīla Gurudeva left India and began his worldwide preaching tours, he found many who had become more advanced than those which Śrīla Prabhupāda had been preaching to. By this time, some thirty years had passed, and many of those who had begun their instructions under Śrīla Prabhupāda, and who had now chanted the Holy Names thousands of times, were ready to receive some clarifications and explanations of the more advanced teachings. The original, "laying of the foundation," which was done by Śrīla Prabhupāda, is discussed here in an excerpt from a lecture by Śrīla Gurudeva:

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

First, if any temple is going to be built, we'll have to clear the ground. The trees having thorns are useless and need to be cut, giving some land for building. But to dig and to sweep is not everything. To dig for the construction of the basement of this big temple is not everything. So [Śrīla Prabhupāda] has first cleared the atmosphere and prepared the ground by preaching the holy name and the message of the Gītā, and this is very important work. Without this, he could not have given these more advanced concepts. Lord Caitanya also first preached throughout the world Kṛṣṇa's name, but He also wanted all Vaiṣṇavas to understand His inner mood. Otherwise, without a foundation, not everyone can understand it. So, your Prabhupāda has done this task, and it was so necessary for all the world, but this is not all he did. That was only the basement or foundation. (Lecture—19 Sept.1994)

This same aspect of building on higher and higher levels, from the basement or foundation to the top is also expressed in regard to another way that Śrīla Gurudeva came to lead us upward, to higher truths. During one of his morning walks, a devotee said to him:

We feel that Śrīla Prabhupāda was the first wave of bhakti in our life, and you are coming as the second wave.

In response, Śrīla Gurudeva said:

He declared everywhere that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of God, and now he has told me to preach that you should forget this. In that regard, it seems as if there is something different in our preaching, but it is important to know that both conceptions are in one line and with one purport. The first stage calls out to the conditioned souls, "Come, you must know that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of God." Then, after this conception is fixed, then try to forget it; otherwise, you will not attain the moods and intimate services of the residents of Vṇḍāvana.

So, the qualities of Kṛṣṇa as the cowherd boy, and not as the Supreme Personality of God, are the ones we are to eventually come to be most interested in. Ultimately, like the residents of Vṇḍāvana, we are to love Kṛṣṇa solely for His sweetness, and even if we are told that He is God, as the gopīs once were, we are to be totally disinterested in this truth.

For now, most of us are not yet at this level, and it is never a good idea to try to run before we can walk, but, at the same time, we must know our goal, even before we reach it.

So now, as we try to go higher and higher ourselves, let's begin to explore the qualities of Kṛṣṇa.

The Categories of Qualities—

From Common to Exclusively His Own

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has an unlimited number of qualities, but in a way, that is very similar to the limbs of bhakti that we shared earlier in this lesson, our ācārya, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has listed sixty-four of these qualities as most prevalent.

When we spoke about the limbs of bhakti, we said that there are many ways to serve Kṛṣṇa that are not specifically included in the list given, and in this same way, Kṛṣṇa possesses many qualities that are not listed as well.

In one of his books, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has listed these topmost sixty-four qualities, and in his summary study of this book, called "The Nectar of Devotion," Śrīla Prabhupāda has given this list along with explanations and examples of these qualities, therefore, we will rely on this later work for all the quotes we will use in describing these qualities to you.

We should also mention that each of these qualities, along with its explanation and example are excellent subjects for use in the bhakti limbs of remembrance (smaranam) and meditation (dhyānam). Using the system, we have shared with you, you can read any of these quotes several times and then meditate upon them, either during your chanting of the Holy Names or at any other time as well. In this way, we begin to enter the practice of

Staple

bhajana—deep, emotion-driven meditation.

Truthfully, we cannot possibly overemphasize how important it is to begin to develop our meditations in this way.

So far, we have given you the Holy Names of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the mahā-mantra (Look down!), and we have given you various meditations to draw you into the truths of the Names. Next, we shared descriptions of the forms of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, again providing you with truths and verses to meditate upon. Have you used these as we suggested?

Remember—**bhakti-yoga is about practice.** If we do not practice the experiments of this science, we cannot expect to receive the results that are promised. If you have been practicing these techniques, if you have chanted the Holy Names and meditated on the truths of the Names and forms of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, then surely you are finding that the mind is becoming easier to control, that you are losing interest in material affairs, and that your interest in bhakti is increasing, for these are the results one automatically achieves from remembering Kṛṣṇa with faith and dedication.

Having passed on these truths, let's look at the four divisions of Kṛṣṇa's qualities.

- 1) Common qualities—these are possessed in full by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but they can also be possessed in lesser and varying degrees by all living entities. There are fifty of these qualities.
- 2) Qualities of the demigods—these are possessed in full by Śrī Kṛṣṇa and partially manifested in demigods such as Lord Brahmā (the empowered sub-creator of each material universe) and Lord Śiva. There are five of these qualities.
- 3) Qualities of the Supreme Lord—these are possessed in full by both Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Lord Nārāyaṇa, His majestic, four-armed form. There are five of these qualities.
- 4) Qualities unique to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boy (gopa) of Vṛndāvana—possessed only by Kṛṣṇa in His original, cowherd boy form. There are four of these qualities.

Qualities Unique to Śrī Kṛṣṇa

You may be wondering why we have chosen to begin with the final set of gunas (qualities) listed above, so let us explain. The first reason is simply that the space remaining in this lesson will not allow us to cover all Kṛṣṇa's qualities this month, so, in deciding what we should fit in, we relied on the second reason, we wanted to share the most unique of all His qualities with you.

After this section, we will simply list the other sixty qualities mentioned above, and then, in a future lesson, we will provide details and descriptions of them.

Śrīla Prabhupāda describes Śrī Kṛṣṇa's unique qualities in these ways:

Unique Quality #1

Performer of Wonderful Activities

In the [Vedas], the Lord says, "Although I have many fascinating pastimes, whenever I think of My pastime (līlā) of dancing with the gopīs in the forest at night (rāsa-līlā), I become eager to engage in it again."

One devotee has said, "I know about Nārāyaṇa, the husband of the goddess of fortune, and I also know about many other incarnations of the Lord. Certainly, all the pastimes of such incarnations are exciting to my mind, but still, the pastimes of the rāsa-līlā performed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself are wonderfully increasing my transcendental pleasure."

In the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, the gopīs lament, "My dear Kṛṣṇa, during the daytime when You go out into the forest of Vṛndāvana with Your cows, we consider one moment to be twelve years, and it is very difficult for us to pass time. And again, when you come back at the end of the day, by seeing Your beautiful face, we are so much attracted that we are unable to stop looking upon You constantly. At these times, when there is occasional blinking of our eyelids, we condemn

the creator Lord Brahmā as a dunce, because he does not know how to make perfect eyes!" In other words, the gopīs were disturbed by the blinking of their eyes because for the moment that their eyes were closed they could not see Kṛṣṇa. This means that the gopīs love for Kṛṣṇa was so great and ecstatic that they were disturbed by even His momentary absence. And when they saw Kṛṣṇa, they were also disturbed. This is a paradox.

One gopī, expressing herself to Kṛṣṇa says: "When we meet you at night, we consider the duration of night to be very small. And why speak of only this night? Even if we had a night of Brahmā we would consider it a very short time!" We get an idea [of the length of] Brahmā's day from the following statement of the Bhagavad-Gītā: By human calculation, a thousand yuga cycles taken together is Brahmā's one day. And such also is the duration of his night. (B.G. 8.17) [This equals 64, 300, 000, 000 earth years.] The gopīs said that even if they could have that duration of night, it would still not be sufficient for their meeting with Kṛṣṇa.

Unique Quality #2

Kṛṣṇa's Attractive Flute

In the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, the gopīs tell Mother Yaśoda, "When your son plays on His flute, Lord Śiva, Lord Brahmā, and Indra—although they are supposed to be the greatest learned scholars and personalities—they all become bewildered. Although they are all great personalities, by hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute they humbly bow down and become grave from studying its sound.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī thus describes the vibration of Kṛṣṇa's flute: "The sound vibration created by the flute of Kṛṣṇa wonderfully stopped Lord Śiva from playing his dindima drum, and the same flute has caused great sages like the four Kumāras to become disturbed in their meditation. It has caused Lord Brahma, who was sitting on the lotus flower to carry out the function of creation, to become astonished. And Anantadeva (a gigantic, multi-headed serpent from of the Lord), who was calmly holding all the planets on His hood, was moving in this way and that due to the transcendental vibration from Kṛṣṇa's flute, which penetrated through the covering of the universe and reached the spiritual sky."

Unique Quality #3

Kṛṣṇa Is Surrounded by Loving Devotees

When we speak of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is not alone. Kṛṣṇa means His name, His qualities, His fame, His friends, His paraphernalia, His entourage—all of these are included. When we speak of a king, it is to be understood that he is surrounded by ministers, secretaries, military commanders and many other people. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa is not impersonal. In His Vṛndāvana pastimes especially, He is surrounded by the gopīs, the cowherd boys, His father, His mother and all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana.

Unique Quality #4

Kṛṣṇa's Exquisite Beauty

In the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Uddhava, Kṛṣṇa's friend, tells Vidura, "My dear sir, Kṛṣṇa's form was most wonderful when He appeared on this planet and exhibited the potency of His internal energy (svarūpa-sakti). His wonderful attractive form was present during His pastimes on this planet, and by His internal potency He exhibited His opulence's, which are striking to everyone. His personal beauty was so great that there was no necessity for His wearing ornaments on His body. In fact, instead of the ornaments beautifying Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa's beauty enhanced the ornaments."

Regarding the attractiveness of Kṛṣṇa's bodily beauty and the sound vibration of His flute, in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, the gopīs address Kṛṣṇa as follow: "Although our attitude towards You resembles the loving affairs of a paramour, we cannot but wonder at how no woman can maintain her chastity upon hearing the vibration of Your flute. And not only women, but

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

even strong-hearted men are subject to falling down from their position (neglecting their duties) at the sound of Your flute. In fact, we have seen that in Vṛndāvana even the cows, the deer, the birds, the trees—everyone—has been enchanted by the sweet vibration of Your flute and the fascinating beauty of Your persona.”

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written: “One day Kṛṣṇa happened to see the shadow of His beautiful form reflected on the jeweled foreground. Upon seeing this bodily reflection, He expressed His feelings, ‘How wonderful it is that I have never seen such a beautiful form! Although it is My own form, still, like Rādhā, I am trying to embrace this form and enjoy celestial bliss.” This statement shows how Kṛṣṇa and His shadow reflection are one and the same. There is no difference between Kṛṣṇa and His shadow reflection, nor between Kṛṣṇa and His picture. That is the transcendental position of Kṛṣṇa.

We ask you to note the underlined statement above as it applies to the picture we sent you in Lesson 17, where we explained the process of Deity worship (arcana). We should keep these types of truths in mind for they will allow us to feel the presence of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa no matter what material circumstances we find ourselves in.

A Summation of Kṛṣṇa’s Qualities

After sharing Kṛṣṇa’s sixty-four qualities with us, Śrīla Prabhupāda beautifully sums up these descriptions in this way:

The above statements describe some of the wonderful reservoirs of pleasure within Kṛṣṇa, as well as the transcendental qualities of His personality. The transcendental qualities of Kṛṣṇa are compared to the ocean: no one can estimate the length and breadth of the ocean. But as one can understand the ocean’s contents simply by testing one drop of it, so these statements will give us some understanding of Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental position and qualities.

In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Lord Brahmā says, “My dear Lord, the inconceivable qualities, beauties and activities which You have revealed by Your presence on this planet cannot be calculated by any material measurement. If one even tries to imagine that, ‘Kṛṣṇa may be like this,’ that is also impossible. The day may come when material scientists, after many, many births, or after many, many years will be able to estimate the atomic constitution of the whole world, or he may be able to count the atomic fragments that permeate the sky, or he may even give an estimate of all the atoms within the universe, but still he will never be able to count the transcendental qualities in Your reservoir of transcendental bliss.”

By these truths, we can see that the sixty-four qualities that were compiled by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī are only a fraction, of a fraction, of a fraction of the total qualities that Kṛṣṇa possesses, and, in a future lesson, we’ll share the other sixty qualities in this list and a few more as well.

For now, we ask you to study and meditate on these truths, because, by doing so, we begin to get to know the Lord, and to know, know, know Him, is to love, love, love Him, and we pray, that by the guidance and blessing of Śrī guru, we all reach the point where we do, where we do, where we do.

Review and Closing

As we near the end of another leg of our journey together, we remind you to always remain humble and to never believe that this is a journey that we can complete on our own. Unless and until we accept that we need the guidance and mercy of Śrī guru, and as long as we feel that bowing down to and worshipping our ācāryas is something we need not do or are incapable of, we will remain far, far away from the entrance to the temple of bhakti.

Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa send Their most confidential associates, in the forms of Śrī guru, to deliver us from the illusions of this world. The illusions, which begin with the covering of false ego, keep us in denial about who we really are and what our only true purpose it. It is Śrī guru, in his many forms, through his books,

his lectures, and, like Śrī Kṛṣṇa, even through his picture, that we are lead down the bhakti path toward the one and only real goal of our lives—prema-bhakti, the love-driven service of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa that is built upon an intensely intimate relationship with Them.

Therefore, as we begin and end each day, and at every step and moment along the way, we must expose our very soul to Śrī guru, for in doing so, we will find that it is he who is dragging us along, it is he who is most concerned about us, and it is he who will be most pleased to see us complete our journey to prema.

Our list of subjects this month was quite short. We started out with a section called “The Pleasure Is His”, where we spoke about the fact that all our bhakti practices are to be performed with a goal of pleasing Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Śrī guru, while we abandon our own personal concerns.

We then spent a lot of time sharing the sixty-four limbs of bhakti with you, “The practices that make us perfect.” Using many quotes from our ācāryas, we listed these limbs and gave you explanations of how we are to carry them out. We told you about the nine primary limbs (Do you remember them all?), the initial ten limbs that we must do, the next ten limbs that we must not do, and we finished with the five limbs that carry special potency (Can you name them?).

The final portion of the lesson was used to begin our discussions on the sixty-four primary qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and although we had to save our descriptions of most of those until a future lesson, we did share the four qualities which are unique to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself.

As we close out this lesson, we’ll share a simple listing of all Kṛṣṇa’s primary qualities and we’ll follow our closing with a short glossary and the questions for the correspondence course. We pray that you find yourself looking forward to each lesson and that your studies and meditations on both these truths and the names, forms, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa fill your time and your heart with unmatched bliss.

A Preview of Our Review

Now that you’ve finished two full years’ worth of lessons, we’re going to use the next four lessons to review all the topics we’ve presented so far. These will be brief, but very valuable reviews, as they will give you an opportunity to examine your progress on the bhakti path. We ask you to gauge both how much of this science you have learned, regarding the terms and concepts that are used, and to also look at how your studies and practices have provided other benefits as well such as the ability to control the mind. Along with this control, we should begin to experience more peacefulness, as well as a greater sense of detachment from the objects and illusions of this world. Of course, the best way to judge our advancement is to rely on two specific principles.

The first is how much we have understood about our studies. In other words, how much we are acting on what we’ve learned. How much we are chanting the Holy Names, remembering Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and so on.

The second is how much of our prema has awakened. If we are feeling a stronger sense of attraction toward either serving Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa or toward these personalities, this is a fantastic sign. And, for those who are most fortunate, a stirring of our love for Them will be awakening as well.

Please take full advantage of these reviews.

The Sixty-Four Qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Here we will use the list as given by Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura in his “Jaiva Dharma,” noting that the exact translation of these qualities may vary from one ācārya to the next.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is: 1) delightfully charming due to His bodily beauty; 2) endowed with all auspicious characteristics; 3) attractive; 4) radiant; 5) strong; 6) eternally youthful; 7) conversant with many kinds of astonishing languages; 8) truthful; 9) a pleasing talker; 10) eloquent; 11) learned; 12)

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

Staple

wise; 13) resourceful; 14) expert in relishing rasa; 15) clever; 16) expert; 17) grateful; 18) very firm in all His vows; 19) an astute judge of time, place, and circumstance; 20) a seer through the eyes of the Vedas; 21) pure; 22) self-controlled; 23) steadfast; 24) forbearing; 25) forgiving; 26) grave; 27) self-satisfied; 28) equal to all; 29) munificent; 30) virtuous; 31) chivalrous; 32) compassionate; 33) respectful to those worthy of respect; 34) favorable; 35) modest; 36) shy; 37) the protector of surrendered souls; 38) happy; 39) the well-wisher of His devotees; 40) controlled by prema; 41) the benefactor of all; 42) mighty; 43) famous; 44) beloved by all; 45) partial to the side of the sādhus; 46) the enchanter of women's minds; 47) all-worshipable; 48) all-opulent; 49) superior to all; 50) the controller; 51) always situated in His original form and personality (svarūpa); 52) omniscient; 53) ever-fresh and new; 54) the concentrated form of existence/eternity, knowledge/awareness, and bliss; 55) He is served by all mystic perfections; 56) He possesses inconceivable potencies (śaktis); 57) innumerable universes are situated within His body; 58) He is the original cause or seed of all avatāras; 59) He awards liberation to those He kills; 60) He can attract the minds of even those who are fully self-satisfied; 61) He is like a vast ocean crowded by waves of astonishing and wonderful pastimes; 62) He is adorned with incomparably sweet prema, and thus is auspiciousness personified for His beloved devotees, who have unparalleled prema for Him; 63) He attracts the entire creation with the marvelous vibration of His bamboo flute; 64) The resplendent beauty of His transcendental form is unmatched, charming, and astonishing to all moving and non-moving entities.

We pray that you always remember
the wonderful qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
We are, the servants of God's servants,
The IPBYS Prison Outreach service team.
All glories to Śrīla Gurudeva!

Glossary

Bhajana + b-huh-jun (huh/jun like hut/run) complete internal and external absorption in the limbs of bhakti with a mood of intense affection and attachment toward the object of one's worship; in a general sense—engaging in the limbs of bhakti at any level.

Bhoga + b-ho-guh (ho/guh like hope/gum) material enjoyment; food that has not been offered to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Rasika + ruh-see (ruh like rut) a devotee who has advanced to the stage of bhāva, the eighth step on the stairway to prema. At this point, one begins to experience ever-fresh, fluctuating, liquid-like emotions which arise due to spiritual transformations of the heart. These pleasurable emotions, which create an extraordinary taste, arise from the exchanges which take place in a direct relationship with the Supreme Lord and most predominantly with Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. When a devotee is at the level where he is constantly experiencing these pleasurable, extraordinarily tasteful emotions, he is known as a rasika Vaiṣṇava.

The Journey to Prema—Lesson 24 Correspondence Course

- 1) Who has fully described all the truths of bhakti?
- 2) What are the two best reasons to perform bhakti?
- 3) Is it up to us to decide what will please Śrī Kṛṣṇa?
- 4) Give at least one reason why we should focus on pleasing Śrī Guru.
- 5) Define bhajana.
- 6) Who protects those who displease Śrī guru?
- 7) Name the two types of gurus.
- 8) How can we easily destroy our anāthas (the obstacles in our Bhakti path)?
- 9) Can we succeed if we ignore the first five limbs of bhakti? Explain your answer.
- 10) Give a list of ways we can overcome our addiction to sense enjoyment.
- 11) When it comes to wealth, how much are we to accept?
- 12) Describe a proper observance of Ekādaśī.
- 13) Review limbs eleven through 20 and talk about the activities that you will struggle to give up.
- 14) Discuss why it is so important for an inmate to observe limb 16—giving up lamentation, anger, and so on.
- 15) Repeat the above instructions regarding limb 18.
- 16) Without looking, name as many of the nine primary limbs as you can.
- 17) Say a few honest words about how you feel about Deity worship.
- 18) Review limb 46 and try to write a short prayer for one of the three categories discussed.
- 19) Discuss the value of spiritual tears.
- 20) Based upon the first section of this lesson, why is limb 53 so valuable?
- 21) In simple terms, why should we hear from a rasika Vaiṣṇava?
- 22) What determines the type of permanent relationship that we will have with the Lord?
- 23) Give at least one reason why kīrtana is known to be superior to remembrance alone.
- 24) Discuss your progress in following limb 66.
- 25) Honestly speaking, are you currently more attracted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa as THE ALL MIGHTY GOD or to His sweetness?
- 26) Does the cowherd boy have more power than the opulent, powerful Lord Nārāyaṇa?
- 27) Try to say a few words about the progressive teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Gurudeva.
- 28) How many of Kṛṣṇa's qualities can we partially possess?
- 29) For you personally, what was the most valuable teaching in this lesson and why?

You may use this course for self-study or you may participate by sending your answers to our Alachua, FL team. We highly encourage you to use them as you review this lesson.

By the way

Do you have more questions?

Would you like to receive free books on bhakti-yoga?

Would you like a bhakti-yoga pen pal?

We're here to help!

Contact us at:

**IPBYS Prison Outreach
13400 NW 140th ST. #1502
Alachua, FL 32615-6185**

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Prayers and Meditations

NOTE: To “offer pranāma”, as mentioned in these verses, is described limb number 26, found on page 8. The term Śrīla Gurudeva, as used here, refers to all manifestations of Śrī Guru.

Prayers to Śrīla Gurudeva

I offer pranāma to Śrīla Gurudeva, who is the embodiment of all auspiciousness and who bestows all spiritual perfection and happiness.

O Gurudeva! You impart spiritual knowledge, you are the friend of the fallen, you bestow the spiritual bliss which exists within your own heart, you are an ocean of mercy, you are an eternal resident of Vṛndāvana, you are the incarnation of auspiciousness, and you preach about Śrīmatī’s love for Kṛṣṇa. Please be merciful to me.

O Gurudeva! Master of this world! Seeing that material existence is like a blazing forest fire which resembles the devouring teeth of Yamarāja, the lord of death, I take shelter of you and appeal to you for deliverance.

Gurudeva! Give Me a Drop of Mercy!**Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura**

Gurudeva! Give me a drop of mercy—make this servant humbler than a glade of grass. Give me the strength to tolerate all circumstances. Let me not hanker for my own honor and fame.

O spiritual master! Give me the strength to honor all living entities according to what they are due (including all Vaiṣṇavas as befitting their level of advancement). When I receive your blessings, then I will be able to chant the Holy Names blissfully, and all my offenses will be vanquished!

O spiritual master! When will I be benedicted with your mercy and thus finally be successful in life? I am so fallen and I have no strength or intelligence. Kindly take my soul and make me your own.

Examining myself, I find no good qualities: Your mercy is the essence of my existence. If you are not merciful, then bitterly weeping, I will no longer be able to maintain my life.

The Lotus Feet of Śrīla Gurudeva**Śrīla Narottama das Thākura**

The lotus feet of Śrīla Gurudeva are the treasure-house of unalloyed prema-bhakti for Kṛṣṇa. I will very carefully worship and serve those lotus feet. By his mercy, O brother, we can cross over material existence and attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Embrace within your heart the words emanating from the lotus mouth of Śrīla Gurudeva. Desire nothing else. Attachment for his lotus feet brings one to the highest goal. By his grace, all desires for spiritual perfection are fulfilled.

He who gives me the gift of spiritual vision and enlightens my heart with divine knowledge is my master birth after birth. Prema-bhakti, which destroys all ignorance, emanates from him. The Vedic scriptures sing of His character.

Śrīla Gurudeva is the ocean of mercy, the friend of the degraded, the life and soul of everyone! O spiritual master, be merciful! Alas, O Gurudeva, give me the shade of your lotus feet—for I have surrendered there. (Now your fame shall be spread over all the universes.)

All Glories to Śrīla Gurudeva! The Desire Tree of Prema**Vaiṣṇava dāsa**

All glories, all glories to Śrīla Gurudeva, the desire tree of prema. His manifestation is most astonishing—with shining moonbeams of knowledge he removes the vast darkness in the heart. His eyes are the abode of bliss. Seeing me so fallen, he earnestly requested me to chant the Holy Names.

I have a wicked and misdirected life. My mind is constantly absorbed in illusion. I have not even a speck of spiritual credits. Despite all this, he is still instructing me about the treasure of becoming deeply absorbed in meditating on and serving the

Divine couple in Śrī Vṛndāvana.

Śrīla Gurudeva is nourishing the whole world with the spotless nectar of love-driven service for Lord Caitanya, and thus he is fulfilling the hopes of everyone. But I have still not developed an affection for his lotus feet, and thus this Vaiṣṇava dāsa is weeping.

Staple

NOTE: These prayers to Śrīla Gurudeva are not just fancy words of praise. Each and every glorification is a statement of a powerful and amazing truth. If we simply open our hearts to these prayers by repeating them over and over again, these truths and emotions will begin to blossom in our hearts.

This next glorification of Śrī Kṛṣṇa focuses on His sweetness, with one pastime (His lifting of a mountain known as Govardhan Hill) that also displays His majesty as well. By including this prayer which is filled with descriptions of His form, we also begin to share meditations on His pastimes as well.

The Glories of Kṛṣṇa’s Forest Pastimes**Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī**

All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who enjoys pastimes in Vṛndāvana forest. His complexion is as splendid as sapphires. He wears flower blossom earrings and His broad chest is decorated with a garland of bright red berries. All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who enjoys pastimes in Vṛndāvana forest. He is the cakora bird that drinks the moonlight of Śrī Rādhā’s face. He steals away the composure of all the gopīs. Skillfully clapping His hands in melodious rhythm, He dances very gracefully.

All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who enjoys pastimes in Vṛndāvana forest. He stopped His relatives from performing the yearly offering to the demigod who controls the rains. When the demigod Indra retaliated bringing torrential rains, Kṛṣṇa removed his pride by playfully lifting Govardhan Hill to protect the people of Vṛndāvana.

All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who enjoys pastimes in Vṛndāvana forest. His pastimes are glorified by the parrots. By decorating His flute with many beautiful melodies, He glorifies the festival of His amorous love.

All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who enjoys pastimes in Vṛndāvana forest. The luster of His silk garments eclipses the glory of gold. The top of His head is decorated with a peacock feather. He pleases the splendid gopīs of Vṛndāvana.

All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who enjoys pastimes in Vṛndāvana forest. He is anointed with fragrant sandalwood paste. His hips are decorated with a golden belt. He is the elephant bound by the rope of lotus eyes of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who enjoys pastimes in Vṛndāvana forest. His forehead is splendid with golden tilaka. His flower garland moves to and fro in His pastimes. He meets the beautiful eye-browed gopīs in the palatial caves of Govardhan Hill.

All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who enjoys pastimes in Vṛndāvana forest. His dancing sidelong glances make the gopīs drop all their household duties. He is the charming lover of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who is mad with love for Him.

He who reads these eight verses, which are beautified by Kṛṣṇa’s charming pastimes in the forest, will attain many splendid transcendental virtues. He will surely become attached to the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.

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