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## THE JOURNEY TO PREMA

~ A Course in the Science of Bhakti-Yoga ~

Lesson 27

**Please Chant:**

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

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- “Pure” Bhakti + Know What You Want...Get What You Need
- The Doers + The Path to the Path +
- Cleaning Kṛṣṇa’s Locker + The Ten Root Truths

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His Divine Grace

**Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja**  
(Affectionately called Śrīla Gurudeva)



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## THE JOURNEY TO PREMA – LESSON

Dear servant of God,

Please accept our sincere respects as we bow down to offer them to you.

This month we're going to come very close to completing our review of the first two years of the journey to prema course. As you revisit these teachings, we ask you carefully examine two aspects of what you have gained from them.

**First, we want you to consider how much of this course you have “learned,” in the traditional sense of study. In other words, how many of the terms and concepts that make up the science of bhakti-yoga have you been able to absorb into your memory.** Since the lessons are sent with at least a month between each issue, we have given you plenty of time to read, reread, and study these teachings. As you study these review lessons, sincerely examine how many of these truths are now familiar to you.

**The second aspect of your review involves an internal examination of the heart.** In lesson 1, we told you that the Journey to Prema is an inward journey designed to awaken the love-driven relationship that you have with the Supreme Lord. Having studied (and hopefully practiced) this science for over two years now, the positive effects of bhakti should now be somewhat noticeable to you.

**One of the changes you should be noticing is that you are more peaceful. This peacefulness arises from another effect of bhakti—gaining control of the mind.**

Before we begin our walk on the bhakti path, most of us are troubled by an uncontrolled mind that constantly disturbs us as it shifts its focus, hundreds of thousands of times each day, in its search for objects and ideas that will bring pleasure to the senses of the temporary material body that we are trapped within. Then, as we learn how to control the mind, we narrow its focus by concentrating it on learning the truths of bhakti. These include the many supportive teachings we've shared, such as, we are not the material body, we must learn to control the mind, and the fact that we are suffering, even as we desperately try to enjoy the rides and prizes in māyā's amusement park of illusions.

Of course, along with the foundational understandings, we've also shared the most powerful and important way to make spiritual progress—the chanting of the Holy Names of the Lord—to which we gradually added meditating on the forms, qualities, associates and pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Since the personalities and objects that we are shifting our thoughts toward are entirely spiritual, they clear away and eventually totally replace the troubled material fixations of an uncontrolled, restless mind, and this begins to bring us peace.

**Along with this calming of the mind, we begin to feel an increase in our desire to serve the Lord.** At first, this desire may be driven by an intellectual understanding, which is okay, because in the initial stages of our bhakti we are taught to use the intelligence to control the mind. Using the intelligence, we can also decide that it is in our best interest to serve the Supreme Lord, who can bestow unlimited and eternal blessings on us, rather than serving our own senses, which can only provide extremely small and temporary pleasures, which ultimately are nothing more than pain, for they bind us ever tighter in the ropes that bind us to this world. (Here's a mini-test of your memory: What is the Sanskrit term for these ropes?)

**Depending upon the level of our faith, and the patience, confidence, and enthusiasm of our practices, the driving force behind our bhakti will begin to transform.** The intelligence will begin to give way to the heart, which will first manifest as a “feeling” of “I want to serve the Lord.” Then as we serve/practice bhakti, in this heart-driven way, our love for Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa will grow more and more.

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As we make progress, first intellectually and then from the heart, we will act upon our understandings and feelings. These actions, this actual practice of bhakti, is the clearest and most recognizable test we can use to determine our progress, and along with this, we can examine the peacefulness of the mind and the feelings of our hearts.

If we are more peaceful, if we are spending more time in practicing, that is in acting upon what we have learned, and if in doing so, we will find that by getting to know, know, know, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, we are beginning to love, love, love Them, then we can be assured that our efforts will lead to the discovery of our own personal and eternal form and personality (our svarupa) and our entering into the spiritual dimension, where we directly serve and associate with the sweetest and most beautiful personalities of all, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Please use these reviews to examine your progress. And again, if you feel that it would be of benefit to you, you may take this course over again by sending a short letter to the address at the top of the page one, noting, “Attention Restarts” on the front of the envelope.

The science of bhakti is understandably a bit complex, as any science is. The Vedas explain the workings of the material world and the details of the spiritual worlds as well, along with how they are related and how the guidance and mercy of the Lord and His devotees can remove us from one dimension and place us into another. Knowing this, we should be willing to do whatever is necessary to ensure that we are making progress in learning this science, applying it to our lives by practicing it, and awakening the spiritual emotions (bhāvas) that will eventually allow us to compete our journey to prema.

## Lesson 16

## They Must Not Be Criticized for Their Past

In this section, we shared many quotes from ācāryas which explained the fact that no one is barred from the bhakti path. All of us are guilty of sins. Our position as visitors in māyā's amusement park confirms that we have all decided, many, many times, in birth after birth, to turn away from the Lord, choosing instead to focus on serving our own personal interests.

It was the mercy of Lord Caitanya that began the flood of bhakti in this world, and His mercy created His unwillingness to set any limits on who would receive the gift that was distributed by Him and His four closest associates (the Pañca-tattva/the five realities of God). Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kaviāja writes:

*In distributing prema, Lord Caitanya and His associates did not consider who was fit and who was not, nor where such distribution should or should not take place. They made no conditions. Wherever they got the opportunity, the members of Pañca-tattva distributed prema. (C.C. Ādī 7.23)*

*Śrī Caitanya, as the Supreme Personality of God Himself, is fully independent. Therefore, although it is the most confidentially stored benediction, He can distribute prema to anyone and everyone without consideration. Therefore without considering who was fit and who unfit to receive it, Śrī Caitanya distributed the fruit of prema. (C.C. Ādī 9.29)*

Many of us worry about our pasts. We need not do this. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī assures us of this truth.

*The scriptures state that even if reprobates, cheaters, hypocrites, pretenders, outcastes, and worse take up the bhakti path, they are still to be considered as sādhus. They must not be criticized for their past, however terrible it may have been, and they cannot be barred from being accepted as devotees, nor can their devotion be deprecated. (Madhurya-kadambini)*

These teachings are clear and easily understood. We need not worry about our pasts. If we want to taste the fruit of prema we need only focus on the now and the future, and we do this

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by taking one step after another along the bhakti path.

### **The Various Steps on the Stairway to Prema**

In the Bhagavad-Gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches us about several types of yoga. Both He, and all our ācāryas as well, have carefully explained that although there are several types of yoga, each of these somewhat different processes have at least two very important things in common.

First, as the name itself tells us, **all true yoga systems are ultimately designed to connect us with God**, for yoga translates as “to connect.” Any other type of so-called yoga, with any other goal, is not yoga at all.

The second common trait that makes these paths only “somewhat different” is the fact that **all true yoga systems are steps on one stairway, which ends with the awakening of our prema** and an eternal position in the spiritual world.

The Vedas teach us that **only the Lord Himself can design a set of duties, a “religion” that is sure to allow its followers to make spiritual progress. These sets of principles are known as “dharma.”**

**Knowing that many of us would be unwilling to give up our quest for material objects and so-called pleasures, the Lord decided to provide a process for these unfortunate jīvas, while still giving them a chance to accept a higher authority and lead a somewhat regulated life. For these types of people, Śrī Kṛṣṇa designed the system of kāmya-karma.**

This term arises from the word “kāma,” meaning our lusts or desires to satisfy our senses, and “karma,” which can simply mean “action,” or can refer only to proper actions that are carried out to fulfill our duties in life, our dharma.

In kāmya-karma, the Lord instructs us to live righteously, avoiding what most of us know as “sinful” activities (theft, etc.), while performing such acts as giving in charity, maintaining cleanliness, and being honest. Along with these, one must recognize that all our needs are supplied to us by the Lord, and thus, since those on this path cannot recognize His Supreme Authority, He directs them to make offerings to the demigods, the beings that He has empowered to supply us with our material needs.

**We are never encouraged to dedicate ourselves to kāmya-karma for it does not cut the ropes that bind us to this world.** For this reason, it is not known as a yoga system. It is only meant for those who do not understand that this world is a place of misery.

**The first step on the stairway of yoga is called karma-yoga, which is more properly referred to as niṣkāma -karma-yoga.** In kāmya-karma, we were driven by “kāma” our personal desires, whereas here, **by the prefix “niṣ” meaning “without,” we find that we carry out our duties without any desire to obtain objects for our own pleasures.**

In addition to this, **we must do our duties simply because they must be done, while at the same time not becoming attached to what the results of our actions are.** For example, a parent has a duty to provide food, shelter, and love and support for their child, and to educate them in proper behavior as well. If for any reason, the child grows into an adult who fails to follow the guidance that was given, the parent should not allow the mind to disturb him or cause him to become angry. He need not blame himself or abandon his own proper lifestyle in any way.

**The final aspect of niṣkāma -karma-yoga is that both the actions performed as a part of one’s duties, and the results one receives for performing them, must be offered to the Lord.** For instance, a dairy cow herdsman might begin his day thinking, “These are Your cows Lord. You have given us special instructions to honor them, for in providing us with milk they are a mother to us. I will care for them for your

satisfaction and I will also offer all the milk and milk products they provide to You. I will only accept what is necessary to maintain my life and I will offer the rest to qualified sādhus for them to use in Your service as they see best.”

**Through niṣkāma -karma-yoga, we attain a peaceful state of mind and we can also be liberated from this world.**

In addition to this, the heart becomes purified and we are endowed with spiritual knowledge. As the knowledge increases, we will become more and more interested in acquiring this knowledge, and eventually we will no longer be interested in performing the duties of niṣkāma -karma-yoga. However, our ācāryas have made it clear that this abandonment of material responsibilities is a very serious step that should not be done whimsically or simply because one wishes to avoid his duties. In fact, this step is only recommended for those who have complete control of their senses (which includes the mind), and who have, perfected the aspects of niṣkāma -karma-yoga, namely performing our duties with no desire to enjoy personal pleasures, complete detachment from the results of our actions and the offering of both every action and its result to the Lord. If, however, we rise to that state, we can progress to the next step on the yoga stairway, jñāna-yoga.

**In niṣkāma -karma-yoga, we connect ourselves to the Lord through non-selfish performance of our duty. In jñāna-yoga, we connect ourselves through the acquisition and realization of spiritual knowledge.**

The path of Jñāna-yoga is followed by celibate students (brahmachārīs) and those who have fully given up their material responsibilities (sannyasīs). By studying spiritual truths, one can eventually realize them. This is to say that they will fully permeate one’s consciousness to the point where both the mind and the intelligence remain totally under control, and every aspect of life is seen through the lens of the Vedas. This vision causes one to feel extreme peace and complete detachment from material life. In the Bhagavad-Gītā Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us that one who attains this state attains the opportunity to serve Him, in other words, to engage in bhakti-yoga.

As we share this with you, we would also like to point out a connecting truth. **No process can lead to bhakti unless the process itself is related to bhakti. Both niṣkāma -karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga must be mixed (miśrā) with bhakti for us to make true progress toward awakening our love for the Lord.**

As a part of being connected to bhakti, comes the fact that **for us to find and then properly follow the bhakti path we must receive the mercy of a Vaiṣṇava, someone who is properly following that path themselves.** This truth is explained in historical accounts where those who reached the highest stages of Jñāna-yoga were only able to progress to the higher stage of bhakti-yoga when they received the association of a Vaiṣṇava.

**Another bona-fide yoga system is the path of connecting to the Lord by meditating on His form that resides within our hearts. This is known as dhyāna-yoga.** The followers of this path must follow extremely disciplined practices and engage in a multi-stepped process where they learn to control their breathing and ultimately the “life airs” or the energies that regulate the physical body. This practice is not designed for this age. In this age, the process of bhakti-yoga, with special emphasis on the Holy Names, is the only recommended dharma for humanity.

The use of meditation is also relied on by many who are not at all interested in connecting with the Lord. These unfortunate souls will try to do such things as “blank the mind” or simply “let thoughts come and go”. In the Bhagavad-Gītā however, **Śrī Kṛṣṇa** Himself tells us the only proper focus for the process of meditation, and in doing so He also teaches us about

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requirements on the path of dhyāna-yoga that are entirely ignored by most.

*Keeping one's, body, neck, and head erect and steady, one should fix one's vision solely on the tip of one's nose, not looking elsewhere. Thus, observing strict celibacy, being fearless, peaceful, and controlling the mind, one should practice yoga by meditating on Me, with one pointed attention, remaining always devoted to Me.* (B.G. 6. 13-14)

*Being free from desire, the yogi, while residing in a solitary place, controlling his body and mind, and rejecting sense objects, absorbs his mind in trance.* (B.G. 6. 10)

In Lesson 16, we broke down which of these proper techniques are most often ignored, but here, we will allow you use your own memory and insight to examine the differences between dhyāna-yoga and the way that many view or practice the use of meditation.

While we noted that dhyāna-yoga is not the recommended process for this age, certain aspects of it, and of other yogic paths as well, do not have to be entirely ignored or overlooked. Remember, these sections are a description of a stairway to prema, so each step has valuable aspects.

From nīkāma -karma-yoga, the aspects of detachment from the results of our actions and offering both our actions and their results to the Lord will always be important. From Jñāna-yoga, many spiritual truths, such as the relationship between the jīvas, māyā, and the Lord should be understood by all. The exercises that prepare one for the postures of dhyāna-yoga are good for the health of the material body that Kṛṣṇa has loaned to us, so we can use them as well.

Ultimately however, bhakti-yoga is the supreme process, so much so that we do not need to cultivate knowledge or detachment separately, for all good qualities, in fact, everything that is needed to attain complete perfection can be attained through bhakti-yoga. And yet, although this is true, the process of climbing the stairway to prema, step-by-step, in a steady but gradual way, is a fully respected bonafide way to make progress toward...

### **The Goal of Life**

To get somewhere, we must know where we are going. The spiritual significance of this obvious truth is explained by Śrīla Gurudeva.

*To perform sādhanā (a practice designed to lead to a specific goal) we must first be clear about our objective. For example, if we want money, we may have to serve the government, get a job, or do business. If we do not do business, we may resort to stealing...*

*In spiritual life, our objective should be fixed first, and then we decide how to achieve that objective. The practice to attain that goal is called sādhanā, and the goal itself is called sādhyā. Without knowledge of one's goal (sādhyā), one cannot perform his sādhanā.* (Pinnacle of Devotion)

In conforming to this, we told you from the start of this course, in Lesson 1, that our goal is prema, and in Lesson 16, we gave you more specific details through an analysis of **what it truly means to be liberated from the illusions and miseries of life in the material worlds. In Sanskrit the term for this liberation is "mukti"**.

To attain this liberation, we must first accept one of **Lord Caitanya's** most basic but also most powerful and important teachings.

*The true, original, and eternal identity (svarūpa) of the jīva is that of being an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa.* (C.C. 2. 20.108)

This Sanskrit word, svarūpa, is at the heart of what true mukti, true liberation, the true goal of our life is. This is true for two reasons.

The first is that in our true, original, and eternal identity we all possess pure and complete, overwhelming love for Kṛṣṇa (prema).

The second is because in our svarūpa, we also have a very specific and totally individual spiritual form and personality, as well as our own relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and service that we perform to please Him.

**Therefore, true mukti is attained when we learn away all the illusions that keep us from recognizing our own true selves, our svarūpa, and thus, in doing so, we attain the form and identity that we will eternally remain in as we perform love-driven service (prema-bhakti), for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.**

In Lesson 16, we also looked at the type of liberation that is sought by those on other paths. Using the words of our ācāryas, we showed that these other types of so-called mukti are never sought by Vaiṣnavas.

**One of these forms is sought by those who follow the doctrine of Māyāvādī. This doctrine (vāda) teaches that everything (the individual jīvas, the material world, the form(s) of the Lord) all are illusion (māyā).** Those on this path seek to "merge into" or "become one" with an unvariegated, featureless, formless state (brahma). This same state is sought by those who follow distorted versions of jñāna-yoga, which will be discussed again below.

Those on the more ancient of the two main paths of Buddhism (Thera Veda) seek a similar type of false liberation. Based on four principles, they say that: 1) Life is full of suffering. 2) The cause of suffering is selfish desires or "cravings". 3) The cravings can be removed. 4) There is an eight-fold path to overcome these desires. They teach that it is only these cravings which keep us in this world, as the desire to fulfill them leads to more births. Thus, by overcoming them, one attains the state of nibbana (in Sanskrit, nirvana). Although they do not describe this state, Lord Buddha has described it as "a void".

Both states, the formless state sought by the Māyāvādī, and the void sought by many Buddhists are unfavorable to Kṛṣṇa bhakti because in both states the ability to serve Kṛṣṇa does not exist.

In this course, when we speak of a "Vaiṣnava", we are almost always referring to one who follows a specific set of beliefs that were given to us by Lord Caitanya, and then explained in detail by Śrīla Rupa Gosvāmī. These Vaiṣnavas are known as "rupanugas, followers (nugas) of Śrīla Rupa Gosvāmī. For a rupanuga, the only goal is to attain the direct service of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa on the topmost of all spiritual planets, Kṛṣṇaloka.

Other types of Vaiṣnavas, however, may seek other goals, other forms of mukti (liberation). These four types of mukti are attained by those who attain the other spiritual planets. These are: 1) To live on the same planet of the Lord in one of His majestic, four-armed forms. 2) To have the same opulence as the Lord in His majestic form. 3) To have the association of the Lord in His majestic form. 4) To attain bodily features like the Lord's majestic form.

In each of these states, an awareness of the Lord as THE ALMIGHTY GOD is always prevalent, therefore those who attain these muktis cannot experience the softer, sweeter, and more satisfying loving exchanges that take place between Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Their associates. Therefore, although these are bona-fide goals that are taught in the Vedas, a rupanuga Vaiṣnava never seeks them.

As our final review on points about mukti (liberation), we will remind you that **for a Vaiṣnava, almost all the benefits of mukti can be attained even in this life.** For example, the cessation of all material miseries can be attained. The common ingredient of all svarūpas is that of being a servant of Kṛṣṇa, thus this aspect for mukti can be reached as well. And for those who advance far along the bhakti path, an awareness of the rest of our svarūpa is even possible. How this is accomplished and the details of what this state is like will be covered in later

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**Staple** lessons, but for now, just knowing that you can attain so many wonderful benefits as you progress along the bhakti path should fill you with the confidence and enthusiasm that will inspire you to continue your journey to prema.

### **FIGHT!**

Throughout the Bhagavad-Gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa instructs His friend Arjuna to fight. For Arjuna, whose material dharma (duty) is that of a warrior, Kṛṣṇa is simply instructing him to do his duty.

In Arjuna's case, some of the reasons that Kṛṣṇa gave him to fight were specific to his situation, such as the fact that Arjuna's concern about killing his kinsmen was unfounded because no one can kill the eternal soul. Other instructions extend to all of us, such as the teaching that all duties contain some fault, but they must be carried out anyway.

**All the teachings of the Gītā**, both those that seem specific to Arjuna and the more generally applied ones, **are meant for all of us** because we all are required to perform our duties in life.

Along with performing our duties, we must also maintain the attitudes that Kṛṣṇa has taught us. **We must be strong of heart. (B.G. 2.3) We must be determined to carry out our duty. (B.G. 2.37) We must be even minded in happiness and distress, in gain and loss, in victory and defeat. (B.G. 2.38) We must set a good example for others. (B.G. 3.21) We must understand the spiritual realities of our existence. We must offer everything to the Lord. We must be free from possessiveness and personal desires and we must put aside the negative attitudes that affect us, such as lamentation and laziness. (B.G. 3.30) And we must use the sword of spiritual knowledge to slash the doubts in our hearts. (B.G. 4.40)**

We ask you to carefully and very thoughtfully examine these states of mind that Kṛṣṇa has instructed us to maintain. We ask you to do all you can to live by these truths, which will of course include sincerely praying to Śrī guru to bring them into your hearts.

And finally, we ask you to understand the fact that in all these verses Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna to carry out his material duties as a warrior, which are ultimately temporary duties because they are based upon his bodily designation as a warrior. However, this in no way means that these instructions do not apply to our permanent eternal duty of serving Kṛṣṇa as well.

If we study these instructions and incorporate them into our bhakti practices then, just as Arjuna fought and killed his enemies on the battlefield, we can succeed in destroying every obstacle that arises on the bhakti path.

### **Lesson 17**

#### **The Search for Happiness**

Everyone wants to be happy. In this regard, Śrīla Gurudeva teaches us:

*All living creatures are making a great endeavor, struggling to attain real everlasting happiness. However, as the Vedas explain, worldly things cannot give us happiness...No soul identifying with the material body can be happy. This life is meant for finding a way out of the prison of this body. If we want to be truly happy, we must engage in the practice of serving God. In the Vedas, this process is called bhakti-yoga, or connecting with the Supreme Lord by serving Him. By considering His happiness first, a person automatically becomes happy and peaceful. (The Way of Love)*

This process, of attaining happiness through the yoga of serving the Lord and considering His happiness first is confirmed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself.

*He who is not attached to external sense pleasure finds happiness within the self. Being united with the Supreme Lord through yoga, he attains unending happiness (B.G. 5.21)*

Earlier we explained how we can experience the symptoms of liberation even in this life, similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us:

*Although one is in the material body...He can enjoy the happiness of spiritual life...*

To find happiness, we should not search for our own happiness. Instead, we should develop the mood expressed by **Lord Caitanya's mother, Śacī**, who expressed this truth in this way:

*I do not care about my own happiness or unhappiness. I only care about His happiness. Indeed, I consider His happiness to be my happiness.*

The so-called happiness and pleasures that we seek through fulfilling the desires of our material senses can never lead to true or permanent satisfaction. Since all material pleasures must eventually come to an end, a wise person does not seek them or take part in them.

No delicious food; No enjoyable movie; No sexual encounter; No sight, sound, taste, smell, or touch that we seek to enjoy for our own pleasure can permanently satisfy us. We all know this is true. Therefore, we must accept the direct instructions of the Supreme Lord, who gives us the direct path to true happiness. Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches us:

*The yogi whose mind is fixed on Me attains the highest and most perfect pure spiritual happiness...The self-controlled yogi...achieves the highest stage of perfect happiness by engaging himself in loving service to the Lord. (B.G. 6.26-27)*

We should all accept these truths and find true happiness by focusing our lives on serving and pleasing the Lord.

#### **The Steps at the Top of the Stairway**

When we discussed the stairway of yoga we told you that the most common method of progress is to start with niṣkāma - karma-yoga, where we perform our duties while giving up our attachment to the results while offering the results we receive to the Lord. This will result in an increase in knowledge and strong feelings of detachment, both of which will lead one to the practice of Jñāna-yoga. At this stage, the cultivation of spiritual knowledge is the topmost priority and from this knowledge one comes to the point where, by seeing everything through the lens of the Vedas, he remains in a spiritualized state where his intelligence remains steady and he gains control of the mind. From there, by the mercy of a Vaiṣṇava, one can enter the path of bhakti-yoga.

Unfortunately, however, for most of the prisoners of māyā, a desire to escape from her illusions does not even arise in their hearts. They have no interest in spiritual topics, or, even worse, they are totally averse to them.

In contrast to this are the fortunate souls, those who have performed enough righteous activities (sukṛti) in past lives to have awakened some faith in spiritual truths and a desire to hear them. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the importance of this hearing.

*One begins spiritual activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by hearing...one should be very eager to hear favorably about Kṛṣṇa...Hearing and chanting are the principle methods for devotional service (bhakti-yoga).*

When we arrive at this point where we are "very eager to hear" about Kṛṣṇa, we have reached the first stage of our bhakti practices, which is known as śravaṇa-daśā (śruḥ-vuḥ-nuḥ/hearing duḥ-shā (like shop)/stage).

The value of hearing is incredible. This is explained by Śrīla Gurudeva.

*Indeed, there is nothing more favorable for us than hearing hari-katha (discussions [katha] about the name, form, qualities, associates, and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa [hari])... We should have love for hari-katha, and if not, then we should at least consider it our duty to hear it, understanding that it will bestow upon us our ultimate good fortune.*

*The descriptions of Kṛṣṇas pastimes are the savior and purifier of the entire world. One may be purified by repeatedly bathing in holy places but hearing hari-katha from an elevated devotee will purify one for all time and make one eligible to purify others as well. Acting as guru, this hari-katha is the purifier of everyone, whether they're qualified or not by other considerations. It is the bestower of the knowledge of Bhagavān's glories, and the very thing that takes us across the ocean of material existence. Singing about Bhagavān's pastimes will purify oneself and the entire world also. (Bhakti-rasayana)*

While these amazing potencies and benefits of the stage of hearing are profound, those who wish to properly follow the bhakti path should be accepting what they hear and thus developing a desire to follow the instructions they receive. When they reach this point, they rise to the stage of acceptance (varana-daśa). The chief characteristics of this stage is discussed by Śrīla Gurudeva.

*Varana-daśa. Varana means to decide to practice something properly. After hearing about something you will have to make a conscious decision to embrace and cultivate what you have heard. You become quite convinced that, "I should do this. I should do this. I should be like this". To decide to dedicate yourself to the prescribed practice is varana-daśā. Gurudeva (Śrī guru) tells you that you should chant one lākha (1000,000) hari-nāma, and always remember Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. If you say, "I heard, but I could not follow", then you have not come to varana-dasa. But if you are doing it, then you are at varana-dasa.*

We should all have an ardent desire to reach this stage, but to do so requires true faith and spiritual strength and commitment. The sweetness of the nectar of prema is ultimate and unlimited. If we want to taste it, we must rise to the stage of acceptance, varana-dasa.

### Arcana

Arcana is the process of worshipping the Deity form of Kṛṣṇa. The Deities are the forms of the Lord that are found on the altar in Vaiṣṇava temples. The Sanskrit name for the Deities is arca-vigraha, meaning "a special (vi) form (graha) of the Lord that is worshipped (arca)".

In a proper temple setting, this worship is very elaborate, and it requires fully trained brahmanas (priests). However, since Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Himself a master of time, place, and circumstance, He willingly accepts worship that is less elaborate.

When we spoke about worshipping Śrī guru, we said that we can even make use of mentally prepared offerings, and this pertains to Deity worship as well.

For those who have been raised in other faiths (which is almost everyone in the Western world), the process of Deity worship will be unknown, and in fact, many scriptures will seem to condemn it as "idol worship". For us to overcome any unfamiliarity or prejudices that we may have we should consider the fact that God is present in every object.

Every form of God is fully spiritual, but our present senses cannot see spirit, therefore, He appears in His Deity form, a form that is seemingly made of matter, so that we can see Him and make offerings to Him. We must have faith that the Lord's unlimited abilities allow Him to exist in His full potency, even in His Deity, form because if we doubt this truth, the reality of

the Deity will remain hidden from our view.

If we regularly see and worship the Deity, our position as Kṛṣṇa's servant will become clearer to us. The stronger this understanding is, the more we will be able to perceive that **the Deity is a fully spiritual form because the Deity is Kṛṣṇa Himself.**

Since mental worship is not limited, we can easily offer at least the five most basic ingredients of Deity worship. These are: 1) Sweet scents (perfumes or scented oils); 2) Flowers; 3) Incense; 4) A lamp (a burning flame lamp); 5) Foodstuff.

In Lesson 16, we included a picture of a set of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. This picture is also a Deity form that will accept your offerings. The most important ingredient of all our offerings is not on the list above, for this ingredient is love. Śrī Kṛṣṇa shares this truth with us:

*If My devotee offers Me a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water with love, I will surely accept that gift. (B.G. 9.26)*

*The preparation may be delicious or not, but if it is offered with love and a feeling that it is very delicious, it becomes most delicious to Me. At that time, I give up all other thoughts and relish it. Even if such a fruit or flower has no taste or fragrance, I still accept it, being captivated by My devotees prema. (S.B. 10. 81. 4)*

### The Best Deities for Beginners

In Lesson 16, our inmate contributor told a story of how he preached about the process of Deity worship to a fellow inmate. This story included the names and the mantra for worship of the Deities that our ācāryas recommend we accept in our early practices.

After teaching his friend Mark about the basic truths of Deity worship, x28 (our contributor) shared the reasons that these Deities have been chosen.

**In studying spiritual truths, there are three topics that we must learn about. The first of these is sambandha. Translated as "relationship", this topic includes the realities of who the Lord is, who we (the jīva) are, and what the material energy (māyā) is, as well as the relationships that exist between each of these eternal aspects of the Lord's energies (śaktis).**

**The second topic we must learn about is abhideya, which is a term used to describe the path which we must follow to reach the goal. And the third topic is prayojana, the goal itself.**

The earliest followers of Lord Caitanya, which included Śrīla Rupa Gosvāmī and his brother Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, established various sets of Deities in Vṛndāvana, the village where Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa carried out Their pastimes some 5000 years ago. Among these Deities were three sets, each of which represented one of the three topics above—relationships, the path, and the goal.

**The Deities that represent relationships are Śrī Rādhā-madana-mohana. Madana-mohana is He who charms Cupid, the god of love. Śrīla Prabhupāda teaches us about these Deities.**

*Worship of Madana-mohana is on the platform of reestablishing our forgotten relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In the material world, we are presently in utter ignorance of our eternal relationship with the Supreme Lord... In the beginning of our spiritual life, we must therefore worship Madana-mohana so that He may attract us and nullify our attachment for material sense gratification. This relationship with Madana-mohana is necessary for neophyte (beginner) devotees.*

The English translation for the mantra that honors these Deities is this:

*Glory to the all merciful Rādhā and Madana-mohana!  
I am lame and ill-advised, yet They are my directors,*

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



Staple

***And Their lotus feet are everything to me.***

In this mantra, the word “lame” means that we must admit that we cannot make progress or succeed in reaching our spiritual goal without the assistance of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the sādhus.

The term “ill-advised” means that we must admit that we are not very intelligent because, instead of relying on the evidence of the Vedas, we trust the faulty information provided to us by the limited senses, which include the speculations of the mind.

By saying that Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are our directors, we admit that we need and will accept the guidance they send us through Śrī guru.

Since the Deity worship that can be conducted by an inmate is very limited, X28 suggested a minimum of three offerings each day. In doing so, he spoke of an important aspect of awakening our relationship with Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. This is the feeling of possessiveness (mamatā), where we think, “He is mine” or “I am His”. The most basic level of this is “He is my master and I am His servant”.

Regarding our Deities, matatā can be expressed in this way: “Kṛṣṇa will go hungry if I do not feed Him”. With this mood established in our heart and seeing our Deities as Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Themselves, we will never fail to offer them food (even mentally) along with the water we offer three times a day.

We should also feel, “Kṛṣṇa is tired now, I should give Him some rest”, which we can do by simply lying our Deities (Their picture) down at night and then waking Them in the morning.

At night, before we put Them to rest, we can review our day with Them in a way that was spoken of by Śrīla Gurudeva.

***Before we go to bed each night, we should consider our spiritual development. Has my faith increased today? Has my knowledge and service to Kṛṣṇa increased? “We do this in business when we close our shop for the evening; we calculate our gains and our losses. Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī used to say that every night we should calculate if our bhakti has increased, if it has stayed the same, or if it has decreased. Daily we should do this. If our association is good, it will increase; and if not, it will decrease... with good association, you will maintain your enthusiasm. If you do not have enthusiasm, it is due to bad association, offenses (see Lesson 6, 7) and anāthas (see Lesson 8) ... we should calculate our practice, otherwise we cannot improve.***

So, we can conduct this assessment and ask our Deities to help us improve our bhakti. We can share our heart with Them, and then we can say “Goodnight”, laying Their picture down until we greet Them again in the morning.

We understand that most of us have some trouble with engaging in the practice of Deity worship, which includes a reluctance to accept that the Deity is Kṛṣṇa Himself. Our ācāryas are of course aware of this as well, and to help us through this stage they have instructed us to perform āropa-siddha-bhakti.

The word āropa can refer to two opposite types of understandings. In the negative aspect, which we are not to practice, we see things that are truly spiritual, such as the Holy Names and Śrī guru as material. In the positive aspect we intentionally force ourselves to try to see spiritual realities even though we are not yet able to.

**The word “āropa” is therefore a means by which we superimpose a different view of an object, thus causing us to see it in a way that is either an accurate view or a distorted one.**

The process of āropa in Deity worship is described to us by Śrī Svarupa Dāmodara.

***Listen attentively to the symptoms of āropa! This method is for a practitioner who lacks a complete understanding of spiritual identities.***

***[When a fortunate person begins to develop some faith in the bhakti path] the guru instructs Him to worship Lord Kṛṣṇa, and the faithful person gradually develops a desire to worship the Lord on the strength of the guru’s words. He understands from hearing that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord, but he does not realize His eternal spiritual characteristics and personality. From the world that surrounds him, he identifies objects that remind him of Kṛṣṇa. He worships the Lord and offers Him objects He values.***

***At this juncture, the process of āropa (superimposition) begins. He obtains a statue of a human-like form of the Lord (which he does not yet see at the eternal form of the Lord) and worships Him with incense, flowers, oil, and lamp, but without the proper understanding that the Deity is non-different from the Lord. He tries to think that all this paraphernalia and the Deity is spiritual, and sometimes, by superimposing the spiritual reality of the Deity into his thoughts he experiences a glimpse of these realities.***

***At this stage, even though the knowledge to act in a certain way is superimposed on the thought process without realization, it never the less helps him to become steadfast on the devotional path. These are the symptoms of āropa-siddhi-bhakti that manifest in a beginner devotee.***

By carefully studying this, we can understand how to begin our Deity worship. And we are specifically instructed to take up this process by Śrīla Gurudeva.

***Regarding developing our bhakti, we need to perform āropa, or rather āropa-siddhi-bhakti. The beginner practices this in this way: The Deity is non-different from Kṛṣṇa. He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. In our conditioned state, we see the Deity as a stone statue, yet we superimpose the correct conception that He is Kṛṣṇa. At this stage, we cannot serve Him as Kṛṣṇa Himself, but as our affection increases we will perceive the Deity...as the direct personal form of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. The Deity will reveal His actual nature to us.***

So, we are asking you to show your faith in the instructions of Śrī guru and in the process of Deity worship as you begin to develop a relationship with the Deities who are meant to help us establish our eternal relationship with Them, Śrī Madana-Mohana (Muh-dun Moe-hun/the final letter “a” is silent).

### **Remembering the Lord’s Form**

Remembering (smarana) the Lord is the number one rule of bhakti, and, over time, we will strive to reach a point where our entire consciousness is always absorbed in remembering Him. The process for doing this is gradual and specific.

We begin by remembering His name. in our early practices, just as with Deity worship, we will not be able to recognize the fact that this name includes His form, qualities and pastimes, but again, over time the higher realizations will awaken. But we don’t have to totally rely on these pure awakenings for we can also learn about all these aspects of the Lord and meditate on them both as we chant the Names and at any other time as well. The first of these aspects that we will add to the Names is the form (rūpa) of the Lord. Knowing this, we can directly relate this process to our endeavor to understand the spiritual reality of the Deity, for this a fully complete form of the Lord as well.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has many forms, but a rupanuga Vaiṣṇava will give his attention to one specific form. This fact, and the reasons for it, are explained by our ācāryas. Śrīla Prabhupāda teaches us:

***Lord Kṛṣṇa has many forms. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu asked Raghupati Upadhyā which form was the best of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s millions of forms and he immediately replied that the supreme form was the Śyāmasundara form. [Śyāma (shyā-muh/yā like yacht) means “dark, bluish-black: like that of a raincloud”, and sundara means “complexion”] In that form,***

*Kṛṣṇa stands curved in three places and holds His flute... the supreme Personality of Godhead has many incarnations: Narayana (the Lord's opulent, four-armed form), Nṛsimha (the half-man, half-lion form of the Lord), Varāha (the boar form), and others, but Kṛṣṇa is distinguished as supermost...Kṛṣṇa is the original personality of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa means Śyāmasundara, who plays His flute in Vṛndāvana. Of all forms, this is the best. (C.C. Madhya 19.101, purport)*

*These words stress that one should concentrate his mind upon Kṛṣṇa—that very form with two hands carrying a flute, the bluish boy with a beautiful face and a peacock feather is His hair...One should fix His mind on this original form of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. He should not even divert his attention to other forms of the Lord...Concentration of the mind on the form of Kṛṣṇa constitutes the most confidential part of knowledge... (Bhagavad Gītā, various purports)*

The reason that this exclusive focus on one form of the Lord is essential is given to us by Śrīla Gurudeva.

*Rāmacandra (the warrior king), Narayana, Nṛsimha, and Vāmana (the dwarf form), Kṛṣṇa is one with all of them. So, an ordinary man, a neutral person, will consider Them all equal...*

*Some people speak like this, but in bhakti, there should be exclusive feeling for one form...for a devotee, one favorite Deity must come. Then there can be perfection in the deep moods of worship (bhajana)...*

*If there are no exclusive feelings for one Deity, then there will be no rasa (extreme pleasures that arise out of a relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa) and no bliss. This is being exclusive but is not being biased. It is thoroughly correct.*

Even after we accept these instructions and commit ourselves to Śrī Kṛṣṇa (which automatically includes His counterpart Śrī Rādhā), there is one final consideration regarding His form.

Syāmasundara Kṛṣṇa exists in three “ages” –infancy (up to five “years” old; boyhood (up to 10 “years” old); and youth (up to 16 “years” old), with “ages” and “years” noted because there is no material time, no birth of Kṛṣṇa for His ages to begin from. These ages and years are only conceptions of Kṛṣṇa and His associates that relate to the form and personality traits that various associates relate to Him in.

As we purify ourselves and develop a taste for our specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa, which corresponds to our form and personality (svarūpa), we will focus on one of these three ages of Kṛṣṇa. If our svarūpa is that of an elder, we will prefer Kṛṣṇa as an infant. If we are His friend, we will associate with Him in boyhood, and if we are a female admirer, His youth form will captivate our hearts.

Again, for each of these groups, their own preference is supreme, and, from a neutral point, all these forms are equal, but, to taste the pleasure of our relationship with Him (rasa), our feelings must be exclusively focused on one form. Also, in analyzing these forms, our ācāryas have told us that His youthful form is the sweetest and that His pastimes with His female admirers are the topmost of all.

We closed our Lesson 17 with an extensive list of quotes describing the forms of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and asking you to use them in your meditations. We will not repeat them all here, we will however pick a few of these beautiful descriptions to share again. And we will also ask you to please go back to review these quotes and to continue to use them in your meditations.

*I will long to see Rādhā's form, with Her complexion like molten gold with my own eyes. I will cry to see the most enchanting form of Kṛṣṇa, who resembles dark clouds, and whose beauty and qualities illuminate the entire world.*

*The lotus faces of Śyāmasundara and Rādhā are the most beautiful of all, and they enchantingly display the spiritual*

*emotions (bhāvas) of Their hearts. It is these bhāvas which keep them greedy for each other's company. Their effulgent (glowing) complexions are bluish and golden and They dress in yellow and deep blue garments.*

*The sweet, attractive, spiritual form of Kṛṣṇa is just so nice. Just try to understand it. Whoever sees Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoys a festival. His face and body are fully satisfying for everyone to see. Kṛṣṇa's form, which is the essence of loveliness, is not to be equaled or surpassed. That beauty is perfect, ever-fresh, and extremely rare.*

*Śrī Rādhā is the most beautiful of the countless gopīs. Her unparalleled loveliness is expanded by Her hair, which is a mass of elegant curls, Her lotus face, and Her large restless eyes. There is no comparison to Her beauty in all existence.*

May the amazingly wonderful forms of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa begin to awaken in your heart.

## Lesson 18

### The Punishment Fits The Crime

All the world's scriptures contain explanations of how a sinful person is punished after death. Within the followers of these texts there are various interpretations of how these punishments are carried out and what the punishment is based upon. For example, while some verses from the Holy Bible clearly speak of eternal punishment, there are those who say that some souls “die”, that is they cease to exist and therefore they do not face eternal punishment.

The exact way that punishment is given is also debated amongst the followers of the same scriptures, but in the Vedas, we find extremely detailed explanations of how punishment is carried out.

All souls who are not released from the cycle of birth and death are captured as they leave the body and brought before a judge. This judge is named Lord Yamarāja, and those who work on his behalf are known as Yamadutas. How this system is carried out is described in the Fifth Canto (section) of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

*While abiding by the rules and regulations set down by the Supreme Lord, the agents of Yamarāja, the Yamadūtas, bring all sinful men to him immediately after their death. After they are brought within his jurisdiction, he properly judges them according to their specific sinful activities and he sends them to one of the many specific hellish planets for suitable punishments. (SB 5.26.6)*

Noting the three underlined sections of this quote, we find very important aspects of the Lord's system of punishment. In the first we find that the activities of Yamarāja are all carried out in accordance with the Lord's rules. Although he may be called “Lord” Yamarāja, he is only a demigod, a being that is empowered by the Lord to carry out His orders. He never acts independently.

The second and third underlined truths show us that we receive suitable punishments based upon our specific sinful acts, in other words, there is no “one size fits all” punishment, such as being thrown into a lake of fire. For example:

*If a human being who is endowed with knowledge, kills or torments creatures in the lower forms of life, the Supreme Lord punishes him by putting him on a hellish planet where he is attacked by all the birds, beasts, reptile's mosquitoes, lice, worms, flies and any other creatures he tormented in his life. They attack him from all sides, robbing him of the pleasure of sleep. Unable to rest, he constantly wanders about in darkness. This his sufferings are just like that of the creatures he tormented. (S.B. 5.25. 17)*

**In these hellish planets, the punishment fits the crime.**

The Vedas also tell us that the severity of our punishment is more severe for those who are aware of the proper way to behave and less severe for those who act out of severe illusion

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



**Staple** or ignorance. This again shows the fairness of this system.

Our visits to these planets are not eternal, they only last until we have received punishment that equals our sins, and we are then allowed to take births in the Earth-like, middle planetary systems where we will be given another chance at human birth.

When we read or hear about some of the extremely severe punishments we can face, we may wonder how we could maintain our life. For example, when we told you that we should not eat meat, we shared the fact that the animals we eat will later eat us, but in one description of these hells we are told that even when... *“aquatic animals begin to eat him, because of his being extremely sinful, he does not leave his body. While constantly remembering his sins, he suffers terribly...”*

While it might be natural for us to develop fears of these planets, and thus take to bhakti-yoga in our desire to avoid them, service based on this motive are in the category of vaidhī-bhakti, where one focuses heavily on the rules and regulations of bhakti. Since this form of bhakti does not lead us to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the rupanuga Vaiṣṇavas are more concerned with developing the moods of the associates of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. In fact, there are many examples of devotees who stated that they do not fear the hellish planets, and that they are even willing to go there to serve the Lord.

The punishments that the Lord arranges for us to receive are the results of our own choices and activities, so yes, we should not think or act improperly. But as far as our past sins are concerned, we need not fear their results, for by accepting the path of bhakti-yoga, we can be relieved of all the reactions we were to face, and then, by avoiding future sins, we can ensure that we will not visit the hellish planets again.

#### **When “Suffering” Is a Blessing**

Most of us believe that blessings come in ways that are pleasurable to us. This is demonstrated by the fact that most of us will pray to the Lord to fulfill our desires for material gains. And unfortunately, in a similar way, we will feel we are being punished if we are denied the things we want, and we will pray for the Lord to remove our troubles. The view of the Vaiṣṇavas however is quite different.

The clear majority of jīvas in this world are receiving all their blessings and punishments, in whatever forms they appear, as a result of their own actions. Under the law of karma righteous acts result in what most of us see as blessings—wealth, beauty, and so on, whereas improper acts lead to poverty and other struggles in life. But, as we progress, accepting the Lord more and more as our only protector and maintainer, what happens to us becomes a direct result of the Lord’s intervention in our lives. Śrī Kṛṣṇa ensures us:

*For those who are devoid of material desires, whose minds are always absorbed in thoughts of me, and who worship Me with one-pointed devotion, I provide their necessities and maintain what they have.* (B.G. 4.22)

This truth is further explained by Śrī guru:

*A devotee’s progress in both his spiritual and material life, which includes everything he receives to maintain himself, are not a result of his karma, for they are personally supplied by the Lord.*

Knowing this, one may wonder why all devotees are not materially wealthy. In this regard, we must understand that such wealth is not wealth at all, and the fact that, even if such wealth comes his way, a devotee never uses it for his own pleasure. Both this truth, and another, which explains how the Lord shows His mercy in a way that most of us would not expect, are explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

*Material wealth and opulence are only illusory. They are*

*not possessions but entanglements, because, by enjoying the material world, a conditioned soul becomes more and more entangled by increasing debts for his personal enjoyment. Unfortunately, a conditioned soul considers property for which he is in debt to be his own, and he is very busy acquiring such property. But a devotee considers such property as simply an entanglement in the material world. If Lord Kṛṣṇa is very pleased with a devotee, He takes away his material property. In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, He states— “To show special favor to a devotee, I take away all his material property”. (SB 10.88.8)*

So, poverty is a sign of Kṛṣṇa blessing His devotee. And not just poverty, but other things that most of us would see as punishment as well. In reading and contemplating these truths, those of us who face these situations, can take comfort in the fact that what we see as suffering may well be a blessing in disguise. Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches us:

*I gradually take away the wealth of one who is blessed by Me. Then, because of his poverty and suffering, even his friends and relatives will begin to drift away from him.*

And why does he do this?

**It is because Kṛṣṇa is the greatest benefactor of His devotees that he purposefully inflicts suffering on them, doing so to increase their humility and yearning for Him. Thus, the devotee’s woes are not because of his properly performing his duties, nor are they reactions of past sins.**

This truth, of accepting the loss of friends and loved ones as a blessing, relates directly to the lesson where we spoke about attachments and the fact that it is these types of attachments that are usually the most difficult to overcome. But here we see, that when Kṛṣṇa wants to bless us, He breaks those attachments for us, and in doing so, He helps us to realize that our love for Him is the only love that will always endure. Knowing this, we should place our love in Him.

Unfortunately, some choose to question this system of blessings because they are unable to see and accept the fact that such losses (family, wealth, etc.) can be blessings. They cannot understand why it would be a blessing to lose these things, but this is only because they are not aware of higher spiritual truths, such as the fact that those we know in this life as our parents, children, and so on are, like us, are simply souls who are drifting through the material worlds, and that, in our next life, it is unlikely that we will ever meet them again, and, even if we do, we will not remember that we knew them before. On the other hand, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa will always look the same, possess the same qualities, and accept us as Their loving associates. Therefore, we should ask: **Does a wise person concern himself with things that are here today and gone tomorrow? Or does he place his focus on realities that will never change?**

We will close out this section on how we are to accept everything that we encounter as a blessing to the Lord with some words from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

*Everything is the mercy of the all benevolent Supreme Lord. It is all for the best. Whatever He does is for our good only...Wherever, whenever, and in whatever condition the Supreme Lord keeps someone, he should stay there cheerfully, and happily accept reward or punishment from Him. Whatever praise or criticism He bestows upon us is solely for our welfare.*

*Everything is His desire. Therefore, when some trouble arises, with the quality of patience, one should wait for the mercy of the Supreme Lord, knowing it to be their only means.*

*Whatever God does is for our own good. We can be redeemed if we behold his mercy in every event and in every activity...whatever pleases Kṛṣṇa, we ought to accept with a*

*contented heart, and nothing else. Whatever troubles come to me during rendering service to You, I accept as the highest pleasure. This is the realization of the Vaiṣṇavas. It is essential to try to follow this principle.*

### **Where Would I Be If I Hadn't Been Arrested?**

In this section our inmate contributor shared parts of his story with you, discussing his life both before and after his arrest. By the mercy of Śrī guru, he expressed how he had come to see his arrest as a blessing, for it put a stop to his total focus on material activities and redirected him toward the bhakti path. In telling his story, he asked you to also ask yourself the question at the top of this section and to try to find the blessings that have led you to where you are today.

### **What Is Bhakti?**

Throughout this course we've given you several descriptions of bhakti, but in its simplest form it can be defined as **a desire to serve God**.

Beyond this simple definition, we need to learn about bhakti. This requirement is explained by Śrīla Gurudeva.

*One must learn how to do bhakti. He must learn what is bhakti and what is not bhakti... It is essential for aspiring devotees to know all these truths; otherwise they will perform bhakti which is not bhakti.*

In Lesson 18, we also explained that **bhakti is a science, and like other sciences, to understand it, we need to become familiar with the terms that are a part of it**. For example, just as we cannot study biology without knowing what a cell is, we cannot study bhakti without knowing what bhāvas (spiritual emotions) are. This is proven by the fact we cannot practice bhakti (sādhana-bhakti) unless our goal is to awaken these emotions.

In a similar way, **we will not be able to understand bhakti if we try to analyze it and base all our acceptance on logic and reasoning**, as we could with material sciences, for these are products of the mind and bhakti is an affair of the heart. Instead, we need to develop and then rely upon a taste (ruci), a personal liking for and desire to learn about bhakti. So, while our early bhakti may be driven in part by the mind and its superior aspect, the intelligence, it needs to later be driven by a taste, and then by spiritual emotions (bhāva-bhakti), and **finally bhakti will become a love-driven desire to serve Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa** (prema-bhakti).

### **Sādhana Bhakti**

**The means one uses to attain one's goal is called sādhana. In our early stage, sādhana-bhakti, we will force the tongue, mind, and other sense to practice.** And how will we practice? Of course, we have stressed chanting the Holy Names, and we've spoken of Deity worship. We've told you that hearing is the first practice and one of the most powerful ones as well, and of course we've shared that all the rules of bhakti are summed up in another practice—always remember Kṛṣṇa.

But even knowing this, are we ensured that all our hearing, chanting, remembering and so on will qualify as bhakti?

An activity we perform, even the chanting of the Holy Names, fails to qualify as bhakti if our main motive for doing it is to attain some personal gain. If, however, our main reason for practicing bhakti is to please the Lord, then, even if it is mixed (miśra) with a small portion of self-interest it can still be bhakti.

If our bhakti is mixed with such desires as relief from some form of distress or wealth, while we are also committed to carrying out all our duties in life, this is known as karma-miśra-bhakti. If it is mixed with a desire to attain spiritual knowledge so that we can escape from the material worlds, and we have given up our duties to dedicate ourselves to cultivating this knowledge, it is known as jñāna-miśra-bhakti.

These mixed bhaktis will not lead us directly to prema.

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

Kāma -miśra-bhakti slowly purifies the heart and eventually causes one to give up his material desires. At that point one will begin the practice of jñāna-miśra-bhakti. From this practice, one gains full control of all the senses and attains a state of extreme peacefulness. However, since possessiveness (mamatā) toward the Lord has not developed, one will lack a feeling of "He is mine" or "I am His", and thus, until he receives the association and mercy of Śrī guru he will not be able to practice pure bhakti.

There is also the stage of āropa-siddha-bhakti, which we discussed earlier in this lesson regarding Deity worship. Here we try to see spiritual realities, even though we are not yet able to realize them. This is a desired stage in our development.

There are also types of bhakti-like activities. In one of these, our activities may appear to be bhakti, but because our internal motivations are not pure, they are like shadows (chaya) of bhakti. This term also applies because a shadow practitioner usually only performs bhakti when in the presence of others, thus they are like a shadow which only appears in the presence of light. This stage is also desirable because we are exposed to Vaiṣṇavas and proper activities and thus we build eternal (nitya) spiritual credit (sukṛti).

The other bhakti-like activity is only a reflection of bhakti (pratibimba-ābhāsa-bhakti). Just as a reflection in a mirror is not connected to the object it reflects, this form of bhakti is in no way connected to bhakti because the practitioner has no faith in the Lord and no desire to please Him. Still, if the person is not offensive, sukṛti can be earned. For example, if out of curiosity one was to go to a temple, and thus see the Deity or hear spiritual truths, his sukṛti would increase. On the other hand, if someone worships the Lord while specifically denying His existence, as is done by the māyāvādīs, they commit offenses and receive no benefits.

When bhakti is mixed with material desires (kāma) it is known as sakāma-bhakti, but when those desires fade away it is called niṣkāma-bhakti. Similarly, when the influences that shape and control the material worlds (the gunas) still influence us, we practice saguna-bhakti, but when we free ourselves from these forces, we practice nirguna-bhakti.

There are many practices which can assist us in performing bhakti even though they are not directly a part of the path. Such qualities as cleanliness, patience, tolerance, compassion, friendliness, and so on are known as sanga-siddha-bhakti. When we use these as associates (sanga) of our bhakti, they will help us on the path, but if we practice them but do not perform bhakti, they have no relationship with the Lord.

We know there is a lot of information here about the several types of bhakti, but we should seriously study them so that we can be sure that our bhakti is really bhakti and not a mixed or shadow version of it.

## **Lesson 19**

### **Overcoming Sinful Reactions**

To share a story from the great Vedic text, the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam + shree-mud bhāg-uh-vuh-tum (bhāg like cog) we told the story of when it was originally spoken some 5000 years ago.

At that time a great king, who was emperor of the earth, uncharacteristically became angry at a powerful sage who had not shown him proper respect. In his rage, he placed a dead snake around the neck of the sage, who, being in a deep state of meditation, did not even notice. Later however, the sage's son, who returned home to this disturbing scene, cursed the king to die in seven days.

Hearing of this curse, and regretting his act, the king could have countered this curse. Instead, by seeing that even his anger had been unusual, he saw all the events as an arrangement of the Lord. Accepting his fate, he gave up all his worldly connections and decided to spend his final days

Staple

absorbed in hearing about Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

From this history of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, we asked you to try to develop the mood of this great king, who was able to give up all his worldly connections to dedicate his remaining days in hearing about and remembering the Supreme Personality of God.

During his conversation, the king heard about the hellish planets, and thus, he asked how a person can avoid such reactions to sinful acts. In the Vedas, many processes of atonement, making amends for wrongful acts by doing something right, are given, and thus the king wanted to know which the superior method was. In doing so, he also pointed out that many people who atone for their sins, will later sin again, so he wisely asked if such atonement was truly of any benefit at all.

‘ In response, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī confirmed that atonement in the form of good action to counteract bad acts is indeed ineffective. The reason he gave is that **“trying to counteract one’s action through another is useless because it will not uproot one’s desires.”** Then, he told the king, **“Real atonement is becoming enlightened in the pure knowledge that will allow one to understand the Supreme Lord”.** (S B 6.1.11)

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī explained how one who controls the senses by any means other than bhakti may be able to avoid most sinful acts, but by these means, the root of sinful desires will never be removed. Next, he taught how the goal of removing these desires is obtained.

**Only that rare person who has adopted the topmost form of complete and one-pointed love-driven service to Kṛṣṇa (uttamā-bhakti) can uproot the seeds of sinful reactions with no possibility that they will revive. He can do this simply by performing this pure, one-pointed bhakti, just as the sun alone dissipate fog by its rays.** (S B 6.1.15)

With this truth in mind, we spent the second half of Lesson 19 explaining the symptoms of this topmost bhakti.

Next, the sage explained the importance of Śrī guru in the process of attaining uttamā-bhakti. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī teaches us:

**My dear king, if a sincere person engages in the service of a bona fide devotee of the Lord and thus learns how to dedicate his life unto the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, he can be completely purified. One cannot be purified merely by undergoing austerity, penance, celibacy, and the other methods of atonement I have previously described.** (SB 6.1. 16)

Thus, the process of removing all of the seeds of sinful desires from our hearts begins with the second step on our journey to prema, associating with sādhus, and its critical importance is given to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

**...if one desires liberation from the clutches of māyā, one must associate with a pure devotee...one must render service to a Vaiṣṇava to revive one’s original Kṛṣṇa consciousness and be trained how to love Kṛṣṇa.**

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī then gives the example of how one can be protected from sinful reactions by the Holy Names, even if They are spoken without purity, sincerity, or awareness of Their true characteristics.

### Ajāmila’s Life

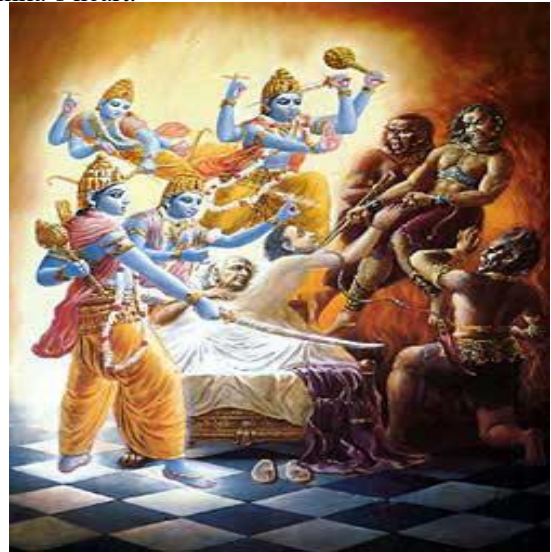
This actual historical account tells the story of Ajāmila + uh-jā-meel/jā like job. Although he was a member of the educated and priestly class (the brahmanas), he had become very sinful due to his association with a prostitute.

Fortunately for him, he had named his youngest son Nārāyaṇa, which is the name of Kṛṣṇa’s four-armed, majestic form. Furthermore, because he was very attached to the cute behavior of his son, he thought of him often and regularly called his name. Thus, in this way, he was performing the type

of shadow chanting that takes place when we say the Holy Names while meaning to refer to something else. As we shall see, even in this state the names relieve us from sinful reactions and protect us from after-life punishment.

Late in his life, as death approached, Ajāmila **“Saw three awkward people with deformed bodily features, fierce twisted faces, and hairs standing erect on their bodies. With ropes in their hands, they had come to take him away to the abode of Yamarāja”.** This is the lord of death who judges and metes out punishment to sinful persons. Fortunately for Ajāmila, he thought of his son at this time, and thus he called out, **“Nārāyaṇa!”**

Immediately, three order carriers of Viṣṇu (one of Kṛṣṇa’s names), the Viṣṇudūtas, arrived on the scene. These beautiful, four-armed servants of the Lord appeared just as the servants of Yamarāja were snatching the soul from the core of Ajāmila’s heart.



Not understanding who these Viṣṇudūtas were, the Yamarāja challenged their authority to overrule their order to bring Ajāmila to Yamadūtas for punishment. In response, the Viṣṇudūtas asked their own questions, requesting the Yamadūtas to explain dharma (duties and religious principles) and their basis for capturing Ajāmila.

The Yamadūtas explained that performing required duties and avoiding prohibited acts constitutes dharma and doing the opposite is a sinful act, and that those who perform these sins are subjected to punishment. They went on to summarize the sinful life of Ajāmila, who was subject to very strict standards because brahmanas are trained in the scriptures and fully aware of dharma. Ajāmila was therefore to be taken before Yamarāja for punishment, for in this way, he could be purified of his sins.

The Viṣṇudūtas, who are expert in logic, defended their interference by stating that Ajāmila had fully atoned for all his sins by chanting the Lord’s name. The reason they gave is that by calling the Lord’s name one attracts His attention, and thus He thinks, **“Because this man has chanted My Holy Name, My duty is to give Him protection.”**

In further explaining the powers of the Holy Names, the Viṣṇudūtas gave the example of a medicine that cures a patient even if he does not understand how it works, similarly, the Holy Names have immeasurable power even if one does not understand Their value, which is not lessened when one unknowingly chants Them.

Without the agreement of the Yamarāja, Ajāmila was released, and thus Yamadūtas departed. Then, seeing that Ajāmila was trying to address them, the Viṣṇudūtas left as well. This departure was carried out for his benefit, for in doing

so, the Viṣṇudūtas caused Ajāmila to feel a strong sense of separation from them, and this is a powerful and valuable spiritual emotion.

Fortunately for Ajāmila, he was able to hear and recall the conversation that took place, thus he developed both regret for his sinful ways and great faith in Lord and His Holy Names. In this state, he gave up his material desires and committed himself to leading a sin free life and absorbing himself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. With this determination, he traveled to a holy city and fixed his mind and intelligence on the Lord. Due to his resolve, the Viṣṇudūtas again appeared before him to bring him to the spiritual planets.

### **Yamarāja Instructs His Messengers**

Although the Viṣṇudūtas had relinquished Ajāmila to the Yamadūtas, they were somewhat confused over what had taken place. Similarly, the great king who was hearing this historical account, was also amazed that the orders of the great judge Yamarāja had been overcome. Therefore, to explain these events, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī went on to describe how Yamarāja answered the concerns of his messengers.

Having accepted Yamadūtas as their supreme authority, the Yamarāja could not understand how his rule could be questioned, for they felt there could not be two final judges—one awarding forgiveness and one carrying out punishment. They could not understand how those four magnificent persons had forcibly cut the ropes that held Ajāmila while comforting him with the words, “Do not fear.” They therefore asked who these people were.

Yamarāja explained that he was not the Supreme controller. Praising the Supreme Personality of God, he describes many of His attributes, such as the fact that all others, even Yamarāja himself, acts under His authority and only with powers that He has vested in them. He taught them that the Viṣṇudūtas, as His servants, had qualities that resembled His, thus their beauty and their ability to save Ajāmila could be understood in this way.

During these instructions he spoke the great truth that we shared earlier when we discussed what the topmost dharma is, Yamarāja said:

*The ultimate religious duty (dharma) for all of humanity is love-driven service to the Supreme Lord (bhakti-yoga), beginning with the chanting of the Holy Names.* (SB 6.3.22)

Yamarāja then goes on to glorify the Holy Names as the ultimate means of gaining relief from sinful reactions. In conclusion, Yamarāja discussed who is to be brought to him for punishment and who is not.

*Intelligent people decide to solve all the problems of material existence by the process of chanting the Holy Names. Such a person is not within my jurisdiction. They are protected from sinful reactions by their chanting of the Holy Names. My dear servants do not approach such devotees who always serve the Lord. Do not even go near them. They are always protected by the club of the Supreme Lord, and therefore I am not competent to chastise them.*

*My dear servants, only those persons who are averse to serving the Lord, who do not associate with devotees, and who are attached to family life and material enjoyment, which form the path to hell, should be brought to me for punishment. Please bring me only those sinful persons who do not use their tongues to chant the names and qualities of Kṛṣṇa, who do not bow down even once before Lord Kṛṣṇa. Send me those who do not perform their duties to the Lord, which are the only true duties in human life. Please bring me all such fools and rascals.*

The speaker of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam concluded the story of the life of Ajāmila by summarizing the glories of the Holy Names. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī teaches us:

*My dear king, the chanting of the Holy Names can uproot the reactions of even the greatest sins. Therefore, the public*

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

*chanting and spreading of the Holy Names (sankīrtana) is the most auspicious activity in the entire universe. Please try to understand this so that others will take it seriously.*

Staple

*One who constantly hears and chants the Holy Names of the Lord and speaks about His activities can very easily attain the platform of pure bhakti, which cleanses all the dirt from one's heart. One cannot achieve such purification by any process that is distinct from serving the Lord entirely for His benefit.*

By developing faith in these truths, we will find ourselves drawn toward practicing them, and through this we will attain the “pure” bhakti that removes all the dirt/illusions that cover our prema. Knowing we would wonder what this topmost level of serving the Lord is, Śrī Caitanya has explained the meaning and moods of...

### **“Pure” Bhakti**

We are puppets of illusion. The forces that shape our personalities (the gunas) also pull the strings that cause us to act.

We want to enjoy. Almost everything we do involves our desire to satisfy our senses. This desire is called kāmā, or lust.

We began our discussion on pure bhakti by explaining that it includes cutting the strings of illusion that control us. This state is called “nirguna”. We also told you that we must overcome all our material desires, which is called “niṣkāma”. However, as we went on to explain, these states alone do not define what pure bhakti is.

The complete definition of what pure bhakti (śuddha-bhakti) is was given to us in a verse spoken by Lord Caitanya. As we study this verse, we should be aware of what Śrīla Gurudeva has told us about it.

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

In the verse before this verse, Lord Caitanya tells us:

*The performance of pure bhakti (śuddha-bhakti + shooduh) results in the attainment of prema. (C.C. Madhya 19.166)*

Prema is our goal. Pure bhakti ensures the awakening of prema. It is easy to see why we are to deeply enter the meaning of this verse.

As this lesson is meant to be a review, we will not go into the same detailed discussion we did in Lesson 19, but we hope the points that we do cover will enable you to recall the deep meanings of this verse.

One point we mentioned was that our ācāryas have translated this verse in many ways, some quite basic and literal, others very extensive and full of the esoteric meanings which are hidden from the view of those who do not have a command of all related spiritual truths. Thus, the translation we share should be thought of as “a” translation rather than “the” translation.

The symptoms of pure bhakti include both what it is and negations of what it is not. For example, as we’ve already mentioned, desires for personal enjoyment, which are excluded from these symptoms, are aspects of what is not included in pure bhakti.

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

*Continuous, emotion filled endeavors*

*anu śīlanam*

*to render loving service to Kṛṣṇa*

*ānukūlyena bhakti Kṛṣṇa*

*is first class love-driven service*

*uttamā bhakti*

these are the symptoms of what pure bhakti is. In addition to this, we must know what is to be excluded.



Staple

*While in one's normal state of mind  
ita  
one must be completely devoid of  
śunyam  
all selfish desires and ulterior motives,  
anyābhilāsa  
and one's endeavors must not be eclipsed by  
anāvṛtam  
any activities, knowledge, or other practices  
karma Jñāna adi  
that hinder one's progress on the path to prema.*

The word “continuous” tells us that our endeavors to serve Kṛṣṇa must never cease, just as the water in a river never ceases to flow. It also means that we cannot allow anything to obstruct or stop our services, just as a river will go over or around any obstacles as it flows toward the sea. This is perfectly in line with one of the qualities of prema, which is the goal of our service, because prema is described as that love that cannot be lessened, even when there are circumstances which could weaken it.

**Our continuous endeavors must be emotion filled** because the two higher states of bhakti that we will achieve when we near and reach our goal, bhāva-bhakti and prema-bhakti, are both driven by the loving emotions that overflow from our hearts. If we remain under the control of the illusions of māyā, the forces that influence us (the guṇas) will be the doers. They will pull the strings that keep us caught up in material affairs. But as we cut these strings, it will be our love-based spiritual emotions that will become the motivators of our service to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

**Our continuous, emotion fill endeavors must be carried out with the intent of rendering service, and the object of our service must be Kṛṣṇa, in His topmost form as the cowherd boy of Vṛndāvana.** While some true Vaiṣṇavas focus their service on other forms of the Lord, the followers of Lord Caitanya exclusively long for the service of this sweetest form of the Lord.

**Our service must be performed out of genuine kindness toward Him,** even though, in some cases, this will not seem to be giving Him pleasure. We cannot use His pleasure as our only criteria because when demons attack Kṛṣṇa, He enjoys the pleasure of exhibiting His heroic fighting spirit, but since the demons meant to harm Him, rather than to be kind to Him, their acts cannot be considered as bhakti. Another example given is that of His own mother, who once stopped feeding Him to attend to some milk that was boiling over on the stove. Although this displeased Kṛṣṇa, causing Him to cry, His mother's intent was to use the milk to nourish Him and make delicious sweets for Him, so her acts were pure bhakti because they were done out of genuine kindness toward Him.

The inclusion of the condition of being in one's normal state of mind is given because, **in a time of emergency, even a pure devotee may make a request that seems to be self-centered.** An example is given of how Kṛṣṇa's own father once called for Kṛṣṇa to save him when he was threatened by a fire.

Except for such states, **one must be completely devoid of all selfish desires and ulterior motives.** We must never seek any personal gains. This includes both fulfilling the demands of our senses and desiring to be relieved from any suffering that we may face.

The so-called pleasures and happiness that we receive from our material senses, as well as the discomfort we endure, are both coming to us based upon our past activities. Knowing this, we are to accept both equally. **Our service to Kṛṣṇa cannot be carried out as though He is a merchant. We cannot ask or expect Him to give us material things we want or to take away any situation we don't want.** This proper mood even

extends as far as seeking deliverance from the material worlds. **Lord Caitanya Himself has taught us this standard, for in one of the eight verses He wrote He says that the only thing He wants is the opportunity to serve the Lord in birth after birth.**

When we are ready, Kṛṣṇa will remove us from the material dimension and bring us to His spiritual abode. Until that time comes, we are to accept whatever material situation our own actions have brought to us while we continue to serve the Lord, seeking only the chance to serve Him more and more.

Pure bhakti can be performed in both the temporary material bodies that Kṛṣṇa has loaned to us and in our original spiritual form and identity as well. While in this world, we must engage the material body in proper actions (karma) and we must endeavor to gain spiritual knowledge (Jñāna). For these reasons, the symptoms of pure bhakti tell us that our service must not be “eclipsed” by karma and Jñāna, rather than telling us it must be entirely devoid of them, as it did will selfish desires.

**Actions (karma) that are included in pure bhakti include such activities as cleaning the temple and cooking for the Deities, thus by performing them, our bhakti is not eclipsed or overtaken by these acts.** However, with the proper actions (karma) given in the Vedas, there are other activities that are not directly related to the Lord's service, for example, honoring one's forefathers. If we perform these acts with the understanding that we are not required to perform them, because, by bhakti alone, all our duties are met, then our carrying them out does not eclipse our bhakti. If, on the other hand, we feel that our bhakti will either be aided by these acts or damaged by their non-performance, then our bhakti is eclipsed. This fault also occurs if we believe that any activity other than serving the Lord through hearing, chanting, remembering and so on is equal to bhakti or that they will give the same results as bhakti.

Jñāna, knowledge, is generally of three types:

- 1) Knowledge of the Supreme Lord;
- 2) Knowledge of the jīvas and their relationship to the Lord;
- 3) Knowledge that attempts to establish that the featureless aspect of the Lord (brahma) is supreme and that the jīva who overcomes māyā can attain a status equal to brahma by “merging into” or “becoming one” with brahma.

This third category is not actual knowledge, for the jīva cannot ever be equal to any aspect of the Lord, nor can the jīva ever give up its individuality.

The first aspect of knowledge, that relating to the Supreme Lord, exists in two divisions. One establishes the Lord as **THE ALMIGHTY GOD**, while the other focuses on His sweet character as the cowherd boy of Vṛndāvana. As we shared earlier, the followers of Lord Caitanya are exclusively interested in the sweet form of the Lord, so for them, cultivating knowledge of His majestic form eclipses the type of bhakti they wish to develop.

In addition to the spiritual knowledge we gain from the scriptures, we also acquire information from our senses (empiric knowledge) and from the workings of the mind (speculative knowledge). If this knowledge supports our faith, it can be accepted, but if it in any way raises doubts, it may eclipse our bhakti.

Our bhakti can also be eclipsed by other practices. An example of this is the physical positions that are practiced while engaged in what most people think of as yoga. While these exercises can be of benefit, our ācāryas tell us they are not necessary, so if we put too much emphasis on them while neglecting our hearing, chanting, and so on then they have eclipsed our bhakti.

There is a very simple truth that summarizes why we are

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

wise to devote our time and efforts to performing bhakti while also giving only the needed attention to other activities.

### **Bhakti Only Arises From Bhakti**

To clarify this truth, we should know that bhakti refers to both the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa and to acts of bhakti themselves. Therefore, our desire to serve is increased only by hearing about the Lord, chanting His names or speaking about Him, remembering Him and so on. Our advancement in bhakti, from sādha-bhakti, where we use the intelligence to control the mind and force the senses to perform bhakti, to bhāva-bhakti, where our spiritual emotions have begun to awaken, and our service is mainly driven by our love for the Lord, to prema-bhakti, where the mind is laid to rest, and all of our activities are carried out in the realm of the pure bhakti we have just described, is all driven by bhakti.

If we are wise, we will follow the instructions of Śrīla Gurudeva and enter deeply into the meanings of the verse that describes the symptoms of pure bhakti, as we also ask Śrīla Gurudeva for his mercy and guidance in helping us to attain this path that leads directly to prema.

### **Lesson 20**

#### **Know What You Want—Get What Your Need**

The topmost form of bhakti is known by several names. “**Para-bhakti**” translates as the “supreme” or “highest” form of bhakti. **Ananya-bhakti** describes bhakti that is one-pointed, where all of one’s thoughts and activities are directed toward serving the Lord, and another named for this very focused form of bhakti is **kevala-bhakti**. In the last lesson, we shared the term **uttamā-bhakti** which can mean the topmost and it can show that this bhakti is “ut”—above or beyond “tamo”—the influences of māyā. And of course, these are all forms of **śuddha** or pure bhakti.

**The goal of our life—what we want—is prema-bhakti.** Therefore, **what we need is a means to reach this goal.** This truth is expressed in one of the verses which Lord Caitanya has given to us.

*O Lord of the universe, I do not desire wealth; nor the association of a spouse, children, friends, or relatives; nor do I desire the four goals which are spoken of in the Vedas, even if they are described in beautiful and poetic ways. My only desire, O Lord, is that I may have ahaituki bhakti to You in birth after birth* (Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka Verse 4)

So here we are given another term for what we need, a path to prema, which Lord Caitanya refers to as **ahaituki bhakti + uh-high-too-key**. Our ācāryas have given us a list of seven symptoms of this bhakti, and, knowing that Lord Caitanya Himself has taught us to desire it, we shared these teachings with you.

**The seven characteristics of ahaituki bhakti are:**

- 1) **It is entirely devoid of any desire for personal gains (phala-anusandhāna-rahita).**
- 2) **It is located entirely in the spiritual dimension and all the qualities of this dimension are present within it (cinmaya-svabhāva-āśraya).**
- 3) **All of the characteristics and potencies of Kṛṣṇa’s bliss, and even those which bring happiness to Him, are fully embodied in it (kṛṣṇānanda-rūpa)**
- 4) **It is totally pure (śuddha).**
- 5) **It is exclusive/one-pointed (kevala).**
- 6) **It is unmixed (amiṣṛā).**
- 7) **It is completely free from all material attachments (akiñcana).**

Hopefully you will have noticed that several of these symptoms were discussed when shared what śuddha-bhakti is, of course, since śuddha (pure) itself is on this list, ahaituki bhakti automatically contains all those symptoms.

**Continuous, emotion-filled endeavors to serve the cowherd boy form of Kṛṣṇa that are performed out of genuine**

**kindness to Him, while being entirely devoid of any desires for personal gain and not being affected by actions, knowledge, or other activities that eclipse/overshadow our bhakti.**

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Numbers 1,4,5 and 6 from the above list are expressed here.

Number 7 above, **being completely free from all material attachments, arises when we become fully and constantly aware of the fact that everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa.** We possess nothing. We are utterly destitute. In our efforts to serve Him, we can borrow His possessions for use in this service, but we are never to feel that these objects are truly ours. This truth is also reflected in the fact our offerings must be made with love, for Kṛṣṇa, who owns everything, cannot possibly need whatever we might be offering to Him, and yet He does desire and appreciate our love, our mood of doing something to serve and please Him.

This idea of giving pleasure to Kṛṣṇa is contained within number 3 above, where **all the characteristics and potencies of Kṛṣṇa’s bliss, even those which bring Him happiness, are fully embodied in ahaituki bhakti.** One of the characteristics of Kṛṣṇa’s internal or personal energy (svarupa śakti) is His saṁvit-śakti. By this energy, He knows of others and allows others to know Him. Another of these energies (hlādinī-śakti) gives Him bliss and allows Him to share His bliss with others. Pure or ahaituki bhakti exists as a combination of this knowledge of Him and the sharing of His bliss, and, in serving Him with love His bliss expands as well. Therefore, all aspects of His bliss are contained within ahaituki bhakti.

The final symptom of ahaituki bhakti, that **it is located entirely in the spiritual dimension and all the qualities of this dimension are present within it** is explained by a verse in the Bhagavad-Gītā where Kṛṣṇa tells us:

*When a offering is made to Me, every aspect of the offering, including the items offered, the tools used to make the offering (such as a spoon used to offer butter), the place where the offering is made, the fire which it is offered into, and even the person making the offering become situated in the spiritual dimension. In fact, through such offerings, one’s entire consciousness can become fully stabilized in the peace of this spiritual dimension.* (BG 4.24)

In explaining this verse, our ācāryas point out that these offerings also refer to the discharge of any of our duties, if, while performing them, we constantly deliberate on the spiritual realities involved. We shared this teaching when our inmate contributor spoke about how even the act of cleaning a locker can be spiritualized. And of course, the acts of bhakti itself, such as hearing about the Lord, remembering Him or chanting His names, which are purely spiritual, will draw us into this dimension as well.

While describing ahaituki bhakti, we covered other subjects along the way, so let’s look at these truths as well.

Early on, we told you that prema is eternally established in our hearts and that our journey to prema involves removing the dirt of illusions that keep this love covered. We’ve also spoken of “awakening” our prema to convey that prema is within us, but it needs to be stimulated so that we become aware of it.

In these teachings, we conveyed the idea that it is we ourselves who remove these illusions and perform this awakening. In lesson 20 however, we gave a more detailed and more accurate explanation of how our prema is awakened.

Our false ego creates many illusions. Of these, the sense of “I” and “mine” is extremely difficult to overcome, and it is from this false conception that we come to believe that we are the doer. The truth is that the ropes of māyā cause us to do things in this world. This can be a hard truth to comprehend and accept, so let’s spend a moment on how our strings are pulled.

In most situations, **our actions are an expression of a**

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**thought, or perhaps it would be better to say they are an extension of our state of mind.** When we

“decide” to go to sleep, it is because the influence of māyā’s quality of darkness/ignorance (tamo-guna) is causing us to feel tired. When we strike some one in anger, both the quality of ignorance and the quality of passion/action (raja-guna) are influencing our decision. When we “decide” to perform our duties without any desire for personal gain the quality of goodness (sattva-guna) is in control. And of course, there are millions of combinations where the gunas blend in various strengths to cause all other actions.

In the Bhagavad-Gītā there are extensive instructions on these truths. **The influence of these controlling ropes, which are the true doers in this world, affect all aspects of our lives.** They determine the food we eat, the way we worship, the type of knowledge or information we are interested in, the type of intelligence we possess, our level of determination and what we set out to accomplish. They influence what we find pleasure in, where we like to live, what we like to do, and even where our soul will travel to when it leaves our bodies.

The gunas are the real doers in the material dimension. We cannot do anything. Therefore, we cannot remove the illusions that cover our prema, nor can we awaken it.

All activities, both material and spiritual, are carried out by energy. Māyā and the influences that direct our actions in this world are all composed of the exterior or inferior energy of the Lord. The energy that creates spiritual activity is Kṛṣṇa’s internal, personal energy, which is far superior in every way.

The energy that our consciousness is composed of lies in the margin between the superior, spiritual energy of Kṛṣṇa and the inferior, material energy. Therefore, it is subject to be influenced by either of these other two energies. We should also know that this marginal energy (tatasthā-śakti or jīva-śakti) is superior to, and thus able to control and manipulate the material energy. Unfortunately, most jīvas do not rise above the illusions that are created by this inferior energy, which is also known as māyā-śakti.

When we started this discussion on how we are not the doers we said that we believe we are deciding to act “in most situations”. We used this expression intentionally so that we could come back to it later and make this next point which we hope will increase your ability to accept that all of our actions are the result of outside influences.

Picture a person who is very ambitious. They always get up on time and arrive to work early. Then one day, for a reason unknown to them, they turn off the alarm clock and go back to sleep. In another example, a person who is always happy and kind to others suddenly snaps on a friend of theirs and says many angry things to them. In both situations, and we all know we’ve done things that go against our normal character, we may even say, “I don’t know why I did that”. When this happens, it is easy to see that something besides a conscious decision to act in a certain way was behind the action taken.

What took place was the early rising go-getter, who was normally influenced by the quality of passion/action suddenly found themselves influenced by the quality of ignorance, which causes laziness and sleep. Since this was unfamiliar to them, they could not understand why they had slept late. For the kind and happy person who was used to the influence of the quality of goodness, feeling the anger of passion and ignorance was so confusing that they could not understand their own actions.

If we can absorb these truths, we will begin to gain a clearer understanding of both our own actions and the behavior of others as well. This will then increase our ability to treat people, both friends and enemies, with more compassion because we will know that they are not in control of themselves.

Having told you that as non-doers we cannot awaken our own prema the question “Who can do so?” is likely to arise. In our analysis of this question, we must be aware that prema is the purest form of bhakti, therefore, like pure bhakti, it is situated entirely in the spiritual dimension. This being the case, nothing from this world can awaken it. We should also consider the fact that our prema is not immediately awakened, therefore there must be some event that begins to stir it from the deep slumber it is in when māyā is in total control of our lives. This beginning event is described to us by **Lord Caitanya**.

***While wandering about in the material worlds some fortunate jīvas get the seed of bhakti (the initial desire to serve God) by the mercy of Śrī guru or the Supreme Lord.***

So, this is where our journey begins, and, since this seed is also fully spiritual, the fact that it can be given to us by Śrī guru confirms that he, like Kṛṣṇa is not a part of the material dimension.

How can we understand this? How do these two eternally separate dimensions interact? How does a spiritual entity like Śrī guru exist in this world? We can use a simple material example to help us picture this truth.

Think of a synthetic sponge. The kind made from a soft, almost rubber like material. The actual material of the sponge cannot absorb water, but if we pour water onto the sponge it will seem to absorb the water. So where is the water? It is inside of the thousands and thousands of tiny air pockets inside the sponge.

Similarly, when spiritual beings or spiritual energies enter this world they do not absorb into it. Instead, they remain fully separated. Also, because all these beings and energies are composed of the superior, internal and personal energy of the Lord, they cannot possibly fall under the influence of māyā, therefore their actions are not controlled by the qualities of the inferior energy. So again, we will ask, “Who controls the actions for spiritual beings and energies? Who is the doer in the spiritual dimension?”

Think of a battery that is lighting a lamp. Would it be more correct to say that the battery itself is lighting the lamp or to say that the energy that is flowing from the battery is doing so?

All spiritual energies exist in an unlimited degree within Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, they are called His internal and personal energies. He is the possessor of these energies, and yet, when the sum of all these energies flows from Him they manifest as Śrī Rādhā. Therefore, like the example of the battery, it is correct to say that it is these energies, it is Śrī Rādhā, that carries out spiritual activities. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has desires to do things, also known as having the will to do things, but it is Śrī Rādhā who is the power that carries out His wishes, thus in combination, They have the will-power to carry out all spiritual acts.

So, although we could think of this combination as the doer of all spiritual acts, there is another aspect of the relationship of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Their qualities that provides the answer to who or what is the doer for spiritual deeds.

Every activity that Śrī Rādhā performs is done out of Her prema for Him. And all His actions are driven by His prema as well. There is a very special pond in Vṛndāvana which is named after Śrī Rādhā. Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa perform very intimate pastimes there. In this next quote, **Śrīla Gurudeva** explains the doer in the spiritual realm while sharing the glories of this pond

***In Rādhā-kunda (kunda like wound) there is oh so much prema. The flood of prema there is so great that all Vṛndāvana is inundated by it. Even Kṛṣṇa comes and is submerged in that flood, and both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are controlled only by the flood of prema. Prema is Their supreme doer. So, by prema, Kṛṣṇa is dancing, Rādhā is***

*dancing, the gopīs are dancing. Prema herself is also dancing, and whoever she touches will also dance.*

Prema which is prema-bhakti, the love-driven desire to serve is the doer in the spiritual world. So now let's go back to the quote which taught us that the mercy of Śrī guru and the Supreme Lord reaches fortunate souls, as they wander in the material worlds, with the seed of bhakti. This mercy, which is the doer in delivering this seed to us, is one of the qualities of prema.

In this world, the qualities of the inferior energy, māyā-śakti, goodness, passion, and ignorance, pull the strings that make us dance. In the spiritual world, the qualities of the superior energy, such as prema and mercy, carry out all activities.

When Śrī guru, who is himself, situated entirely in the spiritual dimension, or Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa show us their mercy, this superior energy enters into our heart by their desire. First it softens our heart so that we can begin to experience spiritual emotions (bhāva), then it fully melts the heart so that, in its liquified state, it can experience the rising and falling waves in the ocean of prema.

Throughout our entire journey to prema, we are given the opportunity to speed up this softening and melting of the heart, but even when we do what it takes to quicken our journey, we are still not the doers. Let's use the example of an iron rod. If we place one end of the rod into a very hot fire, the energy of the fire will move through the rod until it eventually becomes so hot that the end that is not in the fire can still soften or liquify butter. But could we say that we soften the butter, or would it be more correct to say that the energy from the fire caused the butter to melt?

The fire of spiritual energy is the prema that Śrī guru and Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are overflowing with. This prema causes them to descend into this world in various forms and awaken the seed of bhakti in our hearts. Once awakened, they further supply us with the knowledge that, by associating with them, by placing the rod into the fire, their energy, which is prema, will flow into our heart and further soften it.

So prema is the doer in all spiritual activities. By putting ourselves into contact with reservoirs of this prema, which include Śrī guru, the Holy Names, descriptions of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Their pastimes, and so on, this energy of love will flow into our hearts and it will awaken our prema.

**We listed three very valuable benefits of accepting the fact that we are non-doers in awakening our prema.**

**First, this realization allows us to give credit where credit is due.** By knowing that Śrī guru and Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are our saviors we will feel great appreciation for all they have done for us.

**Second, by abandoning the idea that we are the doers we will take a major step in eliminating our false ego.** The concepts of "I" and "mine" and all the illusions and activities that are supported by this original covering of our prema is very difficult to overcome, so anything that assists us in rising above it is a very valuable tool that we are wise to make use of.

**Third, by accepting that only those who exist entirely in the spiritual dimension can save us, we become increasingly interested in seeking out their association, in hearing from them, and in following their instruction.** By placing our hearts near the energy of their prema our hearts will soften and then melt, and, along the way, our love for them will become so strong that we will gladly devote our entire lives to their service.

Prema is purely spiritual, as such it cannot be touched or awakened by anything or anyone from the material dimension. Therefore, to teach this goal, we should do all we can to associate with those who are able to reach into our hearts and break our prema out from the long, long state of sleep that it has been resting in.

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

## The Path to the Path to the Goal

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We know our goal is prema. Lord Caitanya has established this truth and He has also taught us that we are sure to reach it if we practice pure bhakti. But what if we are not yet able to remain on this topmost path? What if we are unable to continuously perform love-driven service to Kṛṣṇa? What if desires for personal gains enter our consciousness and lead us astray? What if actions we perform or knowledge we gain, even such knowledge as the almightiness of God, overshadow/eclipse our ability to develop exclusive love for the cowherd boy of Vṛndāvana, have we been given a path to follow that will lead us to the exalted path of pure bhakti?

In the first teachings, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave in this universe, He told us about such a path.

The demigod empowered to "create" the material universes is named Lord Brahmā. He is "unborn" because he has no mother and father, at least not in the standard sense. Instead, Kṛṣṇa creates him and places him within each universe. This does not mean that the same Lord Brahmā exists in an unlimited number of forms, with one in each universe, what it refers to is the fact that a separate and distinct individual holds this post within each universe.

When Lord Brahmā is first manifest, he is not aware of where he is, but upon hearing a spiritual instruction from the Supreme Lord and meditating on it for an extended period, he is given an understanding of a vast array of spiritual truths, which he then relates in a long prayer of worship. When his prayer was concluded, the Lord then told him that He would instruct him in the knowledge he would need to carry out his duty of creation, and He did this in just five verses.

This entire historical account is given a scripture called Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā. When Lord Caitanya was here, He recovered a copy of this text and instructed all of His followers to make their own copy, which at that time had to be hand written, and He told them to study this book because it contained the essence of all truths, so, by this, we can see how important this scripture is.

**The Supreme Lord said:**

*All the symptoms of prema awaken by performing that topmost bhakti that is beyond the influence of the controlling qualities of the material worlds (uttamā-bhakti). This prema, which is composed of a combination of the awareness and bliss of every soul, arises through the cultivation of spiritual knowledge and the performance of the various bhakti practices.* (Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā Text 57)

Our ācāryas teach us that the knowledge spoken of here is the truths regarding the Supreme Lord, the jīvas, māyā, and the relationships between them. Where we are to get this knowledge from, how we are to learn how to practice bhakti, the simple purpose behind this knowledge and practice and what these lead to are all given when **the Lord** gives His second verse of instructions.

*This uttamā-bhakti is attained by one who uses his own intelligence to constantly remember the Lord. This is done by means of relying upon the evidence of the Vedas in his cultivation of knowledge, and by following the behaviors of the ācāryas in learning how to practice bhakti.* (Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā Text 58)

In this next verse, the Supreme Lord gives a clear instruction to follow this and He praises the benefits of doing so.

*One should perform this type of bhakti, for it always results in leading one to Me. When this goal is reached one attains both the greatest possible happiness and the most magnificent good fortune that can ever be secured.* (Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā Text 60)

So far, the Lord has given instructions on performing the highest form of bhakti (uttamā-bhakti) and spoken of its

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rewards, and it this next verse He again mentions an aspect of this pure bhakti. This sets a very high standard.

In doing so, however, He indirectly refers to the fact not all will be on this level. Then, in the second half of this verse, He gives instructions on the topic that this section set out to examine, a path that leads to the path of uttamā-bhakti. **The Supreme Lord** teaches us:

***The results one attains from his activities will directly correspond to the quality of one's faith. Based upon this standard, if one wishes to attain the highest goal, prema, he must abandon all his other duties (dharma) and devote himself exclusively to serving Me, while maintaining complete confidence (firm faith) that all his obligations in life are being met through this service.*** (Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā Text 61-Part 1)

We know from the scriptures that all of us do not possess the extremely elevated level of faith that is spoken of here. Lacking this faith, we will not realize that prema is our only worthwhile goal and thus we will not be willing or able to abandon all our other duties in life. Therefore, the Lord, out of His desire to bring us to the pure path, has also given a path for those who do not meet the standards just presented and He does so in the second half of this very verse, where **the Supreme Lord** says:

***Lacking the faith and desire to follow the path of uttamā-bhakti, most of the people of this world constantly perform activities in pursuance of their own various goals, but they do not have to remain at that level, for they can rise to the level of uttamā-bhakti by gaining an understanding of an important set of truths, and by always remembering Me, even as they perform their duties in this world.*** (Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā Text 61 Part 2)

It is important to remember that a person who abandons certain duties cannot make progress toward the bhakti path. In the Vedas, the word “karma” which, in its broadest sense simply means “action”, is also meant to convey proper action or “duty”, and that Vedic duties include quite a few activities, such as honesty and cleanliness. When we ignore or abandon these duties on a consistent basis our classification in life drops from that of a human to that of a two-legged animal.

As the mentality of the general populace has declined in the current age of kali-yuga, where quarrels and hypocrisy run rampant, the necessity of living by a high set of standard duties in life dwindled, but we must know that this has not always been the case. Also, because these standards are always a part of true human society, the fact that many do not know of them or live by them does not in any way lessen their importance.

With these truths in mind, we need to remember that when the Lord speaks of remembering Him while we perform our duties, as He does in the quote above, He is giving an instruction that is aimed at those of us who are already living at a standard that is centered on responsible decisions and actions. If we remember Him, while ignoring His instruction to do so while performing our duties, our progress to pure bhakti will be greatly impeded because we have ignored the fact that this remembrance is to be conducted while we meet our duties in life, at least until we reached the point where we have the advanced faith and dedication mentioned in the first half of the above verse.

Having shared these truths, let's look at how we broaden our understandings so that we can always remember the Lord, even as we perform duties that are not completely free from all other desires than serving and benefitting the Lord.

In the last of His five verses of instruction, the Supreme Lord tells Lord Brahmā:

***O Brahmā! You should remain constantly aware of the fact that everything in this world is generated from Me and***

***by Me. The animating spiritual energy which gives all beings life, the ingredients which all matter is composed of, the material dimension itself, the very seed of the desire to create, and the specific powers I have given You all spring from Me. Thus, while remaining constantly aware of these truths, you should use all that I have provided to intelligently conduct your duties in this world.***

This instruction, which is very grand because it was meant for Lord Brahmā, also applies to us. We should never forget the fact that everything we have is generated by the Lord and loaned to us. Knowing that He has given us all certain duties to conduct, we must do so while maintaining the mind-set given in this next verse from **the Vedas**.

***Everything that exists is controlled and owned by the Lord. Therefore, one should only accept what is necessary for his own maintenance. One should not be attached to anything because he should remain aware of who everything belongs to. By maintaining this mentality, one can free himself from reactions to his acts, even if he performs his duties for hundreds of years. This is the only way one can perform worldly acts and not be subject to reactions.***

We cannot claim things for our own enjoyment. In this world, if we take what belongs to another it is called theft, a punishable crime. This principle also applies to what the Lord owns, which is everything.

If we have an impure consciousness, we still desire goals other than prema, such as the four lesser goals given in the Vedas. (kāma /pleasure for the senses: artha/wealth: dharma/righteous life that includes some personal motivations: mukti/liberation from the material worlds that is focused on our own desire to escape misery) while at this stage, we can still work toward purifying ourselves to the stage of uttamā-bhakti by considering our duties to be a means of serving the Lord, by accepting whatever we receive as being rewarded to us by the Lord, and by not using more of His goods than we need. In addition to this, we should begin to practice the limbs of bhakti such as hearing about the qualities, associates, and pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and remembering them as well. We will close this review of the Lord's instructions to Lord Brahmā by sharing some of the comments on these verses given to us by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Tākura

***This world subsists by the constant performance of certain activities. Fill all these activities with meditation on the Supreme Lord. This will destroy the quality that makes those activities appear as acts done by you. Then they will be close in character to performing the Lords direct service (bhakti).***

***When we manage to perform these activities in a way that is conducive of attainment of bhakti: they are called subsidiary devotional practices.***

***When bhakti proper (hearing, chanting, etc.) is practiced in due time, while otherwise performing these subsidiary devotional practices, and when one meditates on the Supreme Lord while performing those acts, one does not become apathetic to God even while performing these worldly activities. This constitutes the practice of looking inwards, turning towards one's real self.***

***You should do your duties of the world by the method of worshipping God, thereby, if your duties are practiced along with the simultaneous meditation of obeying the command of the Supreme Lord, then it will be a subsidiary spiritual function being helpful for the growth of the tendency toward bhakti.***

So, the path to the path of pure bhakti is to remember Kṛṣṇa while performing your duties. We ask you to seek the guidance and mercy of Śrī guru as you re-review these truths, with a desire to have them enter your heart.

## Lesson 21

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

**What Is True Liberation?**

Have you ever wished that you would never get sick again? Wouldn't it be nice to never grow old? What would it be like to never be disturbed by the impulses of the mind, such as hate, anger, and envy? If no other person was able to bother you, would you feel more peaceful? To sum up all these type of questions, we can ask a general question:

**Would you like to never experience any form of misery?**

Going to another level of the topic that we opened Lesson 21 with, we will now ask you this:

**If you had no misery, would you automatically be as happy as you could possibly be?**

The Vedas provide us with answers to all these questions. Because these answers are based upon indisputable evidence, we don't really have to try to answer them for ourselves. In fact, **if we try to rely on our own opinions to answer the most important questions in our lives, we put ourselves in a dangerous position because our answers may be wrong, but the answers given to us by Śrī Kṛṣṇa and our ācāryas are always perfectly correct.**

Of course, we would all find it hard to imagine that anyone would not answer "Yes" to the first bold question above. Its reasonable to say that no one wants to experience misery. But as we look at the second bold question we find a hint to an important truth that is explained in detail by the Vedas.

In the Bhagavad-Gītā, **Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes the state beyond all miseries, which He refers to as brahma-bhuta.** Translated in many ways, this state is founded upon the featureless, unvariegated form of the Lord, brahma. Attaining this state is considered to be the goal of some, and although they may believe they are following a bona-fide path from the Vedas, the answers to the second bold question, which are found within the same Vedas that they believe they are following, will teach them that attaining this misery free state provides only a tiny amount of happiness, and that this state is actually only a step in the right direction because, if we stop there, our real goal can never be reached and the true purpose of our existence can never be fulfilled.

As we travel along on our journey to prema, will we arrive at the point where all our miseries disappear, even though we are not specifically trying to get there. This state is reached by one who has total control of the senses, who has abandoned his attachment to all things that impede his bhakti, and who sees everything through the lens of the Vedas because he has cultivated and absorbed their essential truths. All these characteristics are automatically obtained by one who sincerely follows the bhakti path. Therefore, our ācāryas tell us that we do not need to cultivate these characteristics independently, for they arise on their own as we perform our bhakti practices.

Freedom from miseries does provide a foundation for happiness, for how can we be happy if we are suffering misery, but this only is not true happiness.

If we are sick, and hungry, being bitten by mosquitos, and being kept awake by a loud neighbor, we will feel some happiness if our sickness goes away, we eat, the bugs leave us alone and the noise stops, but does the removal of misery give us the highest happiness?

The state of brahma-bhuta does not contain anything to give us misery, but it also does not contain anything to provide us with happiness. One who attains this state upon leaving the body may have no enemies, but he also has no friends. There is nothing to give him misery, but there is also nothing to give him pleasure. Our great founding father, **Śrī Rupa Gosvāmī** gives us a comparison of the happiness of having no miseries which one derives from contact with the featureless state of Lord, to what one experiences when he meets the personal form of the Lord.

**Even when the bliss of brahma is multiplied by the**

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

**hundreds of trillions of days that a material universe exists for, it cannot be compared to a single particle of the pleasure one attains in tasting the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa.**

Staple

Eliminating misery is not the goal of our life. In fact, by placing too much emphasis on it we steer our focus away from our true goal. **Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura** explains:

**The endeavor to remove the miseries of material existence in the form of repeated birth and death is a matter beyond the ability of the living entities, for it depends exclusively on the will of the Supreme Lord... therefore, what is the need of praying for the removal of such miseries, when such a mentality is opposed to bhakti?**

In bhakti, all we ask for is the opportunity to continue to serve. Through service, we taste the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa.

Material miseries and so-called material happiness automatically come and go based upon our past activities. So, rather than worrying about and trying to eliminate or increase them, we should simply take care of the root of the entire material illusion (māyā). The truth of this root of these miseries of illusion and the cure for them is given to us in this simple statement from **Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura**.

**The only path of deliverance from the clutches of māyā is the performance of love-driven service (bhakti) to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The jīva has been put under māyā's control simply because he is offensive to the Lord, and the root of all offenses is forgetting that, "I am Kṛṣṇa's servant".**

So, let's try to remember that our true, original, and eternal occupation (nitya-dharma) is to serve Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and let's wisely spend our time serving them. For in this way, the miseries of māyā's illusions will disappear without our ever having to think about them. And what will replace them? The sweetest and most satisfying thing that exists, the pleasures and happiness that arise from our relationship with Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

**Don't Just Chant and Be Happy**

In Lesson 21, our inmate contributor shared his view on a statement that is sometimes used, "chant and be happy," and he spoke about following the path that leads to the path of pure bhakti. Here, we will again allow him to discuss these concepts with you.

Hello my dear friends. This is your ever-well-wisher X28 coming to you again, from my cell to yours. I hope my words will be of value to you.

All our ācāryas, the evidence of scripture, and the Lord Himself as Śrī Caitanya, instruct us that we must chant, and they assure us that this will eventually result in happiness, but I have always asked, "Is chanting all I need to do?"

A top consideration in arriving at an answer to this question is the fact that the power of the Names is greatly reduced if we commit offenses to Them. In fact, some offenses are so severe that the Names Themselves, which generally deliver great mercy to us, will instead become our punishers. Therefore, to "chant and be happy," we must learn what we must not do, and we must also learn about acts we should perform, which would of course include what we are to meditate on while we chant.

**...the Supreme Person is realized by devotional service (bhakti) that is backed by full knowledge...Devotional service that is based on the background of full knowledge combined with detachment from material association, and which is fixed [made firm] by dint of the aural reception of the [Vedic truths], is the only perfect method by which the seriously inquisitive student can realize the Absolute Truth...**

**A sincere devotee must therefore be prepared to hear the Vedic literatures for the benefit of his progress. Without hearing such literatures, one cannot make actual progress. And without hearing and following instructions, the show of**

**Staple** *devotional service becomes worthless and therefore a sort of disturbance on the path of devotional service...*

**PURE** chanting automatically makes one happy because the pure chanter is directly connected to the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa. But, until we reach this stage, just chanting is not enough. We must also hear Vedic truths to attain the knowledge we need to base our bhakti upon, and we must also develop detachment from all material objects, persons, ideas, activities, or desires that decrease our desire and ability to serve the Lord.

### Cleaning Kṛṣṇa's Locker

Until we become filled with the elevated level of faith that convinces us that all our responsibilities in life are fulfilled by practicing bhakti we will still struggle with material desires. Knowing this, in the first instructions given at the beginning of this universe, the Supreme Lord taught us how we can carry out our lesser duties in life in a way that will allow us to make progress toward the path of pure bhakti. Since we just shared those truths in our review of the last lesson, we will allow your recall to serve as the basis of what our inmate contributor shares here.

Hello again. We can offer every proper activity we perform to Kṛṣṇa. We should do this before we begin to act, and we should also offer the results of our actions to Him as well. The essence of these truths is given to us by

**Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Tākura:**

*You should do your duties of the world by the method of worshipping God. If your duties are practiced along with the simultaneous meditation of obeying the command of the Supreme Lord, then it will be a subsidiary spiritual function being helpful for the growth of the tendency toward bhakti.*

**Everything** belongs to the Lord. When someone loans us something, we tend to take diligent care of it, often we'll take even better care than if it was our own. For example, if someone loans us a lawn mower, we will be sure to clean it up before returning it, whereas, if it was our own, we might put it away dirty. It is therefore just and proper to consider that we have a duty to take care of everything we use in this world, from the material body we travel around in, to the locker we keep our possessions in. By doing this, we can meet the standard of meditation given in the above quote.

In addition to considering it our duty to care for Kṛṣṇa's possessions, we can strengthen our mood of love for Him by also desiring to please Him with our efforts.

Using the example of the lawnmower again, we can easily imagine how pleased our friend will be to find out that we returned his mower so perfectly cleaned that it is in even better shape than when he loaned it to us.

Except for activities that cannot please Kṛṣṇa in any way, such as any activity related to slaughtering cows and eating them, we can offer all of our activities to Śrī Kṛṣṇa with this spirit of pleasing Him. This process is explained in these almost matching quotes by **Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī:**

*Devotees perform all their activities, whether related to their material desires, to following the rules of scripture, or to their material body, with the feeling that, "The Supreme Lord is the object of my affection, and it is for His pleasure that I am offering everything to His feet."*

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

If we carry out all our activities while maintaining these meditations we will make progress on the path of subsidiary spiritual practices, which will lead us to the path of pure bhakti.

As your fellow inmate, and as a person who knows full well

that I am in no way ready or qualified to walk the path of pure bhakti, I feel very fortunate to know of path that will lead me toward it. I can scrub Kṛṣṇa's shower, I can take care of this body He's loaning to me, or I can clean Kṛṣṇa locker, and I invite you to do the same.

### Daśa-mula—Ten Roots

In his great masterpiece, *Jaiva Dharma*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoḍa Tākura has explained the essence of Lord Caitanya's teachings to us by presenting them as ten (daśa + duh-shuh) roots (mula + moo-luh). These roots are compared to a medicinal tonic that is literally composed of the roots of ten different plants, which, when combined, counteract disease and sustain life. Of course, these benefits to the material body cannot compare to the effects of **the ten roots of truth, which destroy the disease of material existence and awaken the spiritual life of the soul.**

**The first of these truths establishes what evidence supports and proves these spiritual realities, and which is therefore the only evidence that we should rely upon. The other nine truths are those which are confirmed by this evidence.**

In explaining what acceptable evidence is, we showed why the information relied on in the material sciences is undependable and cannot ever nullify the truths proven in the spiritual science of bhakti-yoga.

The Vedas, which include the teachings of our ācāryas, provide complete and conclusive evidence about the nature of our pure being (the ātma or soul), about the nature of existence (both material, as a creation of the Lord's external energy of illusion—and spiritual as a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa internal, personal energy (svarūpa-śakti)), and in their full coverage of all these truths, the evidence of the Vedas explains the entirety of reality itself. **Therefore, daśa-mula one teaches us that the Vedas are the proper evidence to rely upon.**

For these reasons, the overwhelming evidence of the Vedas is also known as the Absolute Truth. By using two capital letters, the fact that the sum of all the truths is a form or manifestation of God Himself is conveyed.

Due to the degrading nature of time, these truths will occasionally become unknown to the people in general. For this reason, Śrī Kṛṣṇa assures us that He Himself regularly descends to re-establish these truths. By our supremely great fortune, the Lord appeared in the most merciful of all His personal forms just 500 years ago. This form, Lord Caitanya, only appears once in the history of each universe, which, in this universe, is once in three hundred and eleven trillion years, so we should feel very blessed to be here so soon after His visit. Since that time, the events of His life and His teachings have been carefully recorded and carefully passed on, thus ensuring that we have an accurate record of this direct evidence of the Absolute Truth, delivered to us by the Absolute Truth Himself.

Spiritual truths descend to us from the spiritual dimension. The mind and other material senses have no way to gain access to that realm. The Vedas and our ācāryas are in the spiritual dimension, therefore, they are dispensers of the evidence of the full spectrum of reality that we can depend on.

**Truths two through ten of the daśa-mula cover the topics which are proved by the evidence accepted in the first daśa-mula.** These are further divided, with truths two through eight describing the jīva, māyā, the Supreme Lord and the relationships (sambandha) between them. Truth nine defines that which is most worthy of explanation (abhideya), which is how we can reach the goal of life. And the tenth truth of the daśa-mula confirms what the goal of life is.

**Daśa-mula two establishes that the original, personal form of the Lord, Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boy of Vṛndāvana, is the Supreme Personality of God.** All His other forms expand

from Him. This includes the expansion that lives within each jīva (the Supersoul), the unlimited numbers of avatārs (forms which descend to the material worlds), and His featureless, all-pervading aspect (brahma). This truth also establishes that Kṛṣṇa is favored over His majestic form, Lord Narayana, since the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa provides a superior pleasure to those who associate with Him.

**Daśa-mūla three proves that Kṛṣṇa is the possessor of all potencies (śaktis).** It is through this truth that He can easily accomplish even those things with appear to be impossible. This includes the fact that although He appears in a medium sized, human-like form, He fully exists in all places and times simultaneously. This truth also allows for Him to come to this world in His spiritual form, bringing with Him all His associates and every other aspect of His abode as well, while always remaining completely immune to influences of māyā, which include death, sickness, and even time itself.

This truth also includes an explanation of how Kṛṣṇa energies (śaktis) are divided to carry out His various desires. His personal energy (svarūpa-śakti) supports every aspect of the spiritual dimension. This it is also known as His cit (spiritual) śakti. His marginal energy (tatasthā-śakti) manifests as the sparks of consciousness that animate all material life forms, jīvas, thus it is also known as jīva-śakti. And His third main energy manifests both every material object as well as the illusions and influences that control the consciousness of all jīvas that are subject to its power. This external energy (bahiraṅgā-śakti) is most commonly known as māyā-śakti.

The Lord's personal energy is further divided into the energy which causes the Lord to taste bliss and allows others to do so (hlādinī-śakti), the energy which supports the existence of all spiritual forms and objects (sandhinī-śakti), and the energy that provides awareness of the Lord (saṁvit-śakti). These energies are fully present in the spiritual dimension (even when it, or aspects of it, such as Śrī guru descend to this world), they are present to a tiny degree in jīva-śakti, and in a distorted way in māyā-śakti.

The bliss potency is always present in the jīva, but the experience of it is covered over by māyā. As we remove the influence of māyā, we will taste this bliss more and more. The awareness potency also increases in the jīva through the acquisition of spiritual knowledge, and the existence potency supports the spark of consciousness which is the jīva. When the covering of māyā is removed from the existence potency, the jīva's spiritual form and identity (svarūpa) reveal themselves.

The distortion of the bliss potency in māyā appears as material sense pleasure. When māyā distorts the awareness potency, material knowledge is produced, and the distortion of the existence potency, which, in its pure form supports only eternal forms and objects, manifests all temporary material forms and objects.

Before we move on to the next daśa-mūla, let's look how the full pleasures of the bliss potency are tasted in their sweetest and most satisfying form. In doing so, let's remember that truths two through eight of the daśa-mūla all deal with relationships (sambandha).

**When we contemplate what love is, love must always be based upon a relationship.** It may be the relationship between a husband and wife, a mother and child, or even two friends. This truth is also an aspect of prema, pure love for God. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura teaches us **prema must have at least three ingredients, the lover, the beloved, and the love itself.**

**Love filled relationships provide a special type of pleasure that flows from the love itself and not from any activity of the relationship.** The taste of this pleasure will be different depending on the type of relationship, for example, the love a child enjoys when his parent cares for him is different from what a spouse feels in the embrace of their

lover.

**The Sanskrit word rasa + rus (like rust) is used to express the pleasures one experiences from a direct relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In His eternal abodes, Kṛṣṇa engages in five types of relationship each of which contains rasa. In all of these, He is the central object toward which love flows and His associates are those from which love flows. Of course, there is also reciprocation where He sends out love, but His position as the central object of love is the general principal.**

**Those who love Him, engage in one of five types of relationships with Him, which are based upon feelings of:**

- 1) Neutrality (various forms)
- 2) Servitorship (various forms)
- 3) Friendship (males of a similar age)
- 4) Parenthood/Guardianship (male and female elders)
- 5) Consortship (females of similar age)

**In each of these categories, the members generally have specific types of forms and personalities (svarūpa). These are shown (in parenthesis) above.**

The pleasure of rasa is based upon one's permanent loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa. When that love is stimulated by Kṛṣṇa or objects related to Him, various emotions are felt and bodily symptoms that indicate an overflow of those emotions are seen. While the word "rasa" can simply refer to the pleasure of one's love with Kṛṣṇa, a more complete understanding includes knowledge of how these stimulants and signs of that love sweeten the taste and increase the intensity of that pleasure.

**In rasa, all aspects of love, its pleasure, its stimulants, its related emotions, and its bodily symptoms are condensed and concentrated into a mind-boggling, breath-taking, heart-stopping potency. And in our final description in this brief explanation of rasa we will tell you that this potent formula of love-filled emotions is referred to as "liquid" in nature. This is because these pleasures rise and fall, ebb and flow, like endless waves, currents, and eddies in the sea, this allows both the lover and the beloved to experience the unending new varieties of bliss that make up the ocean of prema.**

A complete explanation of rasa is subject for a later lesson, but we wanted to introduce this truth now because it pertains to the root truths on relationship.

**The fourth daśa-mūla establishes Kṛṣṇa as the full embodiment of rasa.** This is of course another reason why we discussed this topic above.

**All pleasure flows from Kṛṣṇa.** Those of us who are unfortunate chase the temporary, so-called pleasures of this world, which are simply distortions of the spiritual bliss that lies under the cover of māyā's illusions. Those who are fortunate, come into contact with emissaries from the spiritual dimension, and by their mercy we learn what real pleasure is and where it comes from, and thus, if we are wise, we give up our attraction for all other pleasures and focus ourselves entirely upon developing our relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all-the-while knowing that the rasa that flows from this relationship is an unmatched pleasure that will fully satisfy all of the longings of our soul.

**Truths five, six, and seven of the daśa-mūla all relate to the realities of the jīva, and thus we have combined them for the purposes of this discussion.**

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura teaches us that *all explanations of spiritual realities are limited because they make use of material words and are automatically influenced by the distorted view of reality that the illusions of māyā have caused us to grow accustomed to.* For example, words like "when" and "created" imply a sense of "time" and "beginning", when in the spiritual dimension no such concepts exist.

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



Staple

For these reasons, he instructs us to *give up relying on material words and concepts in our attempts to grasp the Absolute Truth. Instead, we are to try to experience the spiritual essence of these truths by cultivating our bhakti (desire to serve Kṛṣṇa).*

This same approach is described regarding our attempts to experience rasa. Since his explanation of this is so accurate and beautiful, we will again share it with you. In Jaiva Dharma, Śrīla Bhaktivinoḍa Thākura writes:

*I know that you will not be able to understand inconceivable (acintya) subjects quickly, but as you cultivate the spiritual emotions of bhakti (bhāvas) within your heart you will realize (personally experience) these emotions more and more. In time, all the bhāvas will manifest in the core of your purified heart.*

*Your body is material, and thus all its activities, including the thinking process of the mind, is material as well; but the essence of your being is not material. You are a conscious entity of minute, sub-atomic size.*

*The more you know yourself the more you will realize that your essential nature is superior to the world of māyā. You will not be able to realize this just hearing it from me, but as you go on chanting the Holy Names these bhāvas will manifest in your heart, and, to the degree that they do so, you will be able to realize the spiritual world and its realities.*

*Mind and speech have their origins in matter, and they cannot touch the spiritual truth. The Vedas say this: the speech and mind return from their attempts to describe or comprehend the Absolute Truth because they cannot possibly attain Him.*

Even with these facts in mind, our ācāryas have tried to express these truths to us, and thus, following in their footsteps, we will do the same.

The first daśa-mula about the jīva relates a truth that will be further touched upon in daśa-mula number eight, but we will begin to share it here. **The fifth daśa-mula is:**

**The essence of who and what God is must also be the essence of who and what we are: This essence is consciousness. Kṛṣṇa is the sum total of all consciousness. We are minute sparks of consciousness. This truth also includes the fact that we are eternally separate individuals who can never become one with or equal to the Lord.**

“When” the jīvas are “created” (notice the use of these insufficient terms) they exist in a borderland state which is somewhat like the shore of a river. Thus, the energy which composes them is called tatasthā-śakti, from the Sanskrit “tata” meaning “shore”. Just as the shore can sometimes be a part of the river when it is covered over by water, and sometimes be a part of the land when the water recedes, the jīva can be a resident of the material world when covered over by māyā or a resident of the spiritual dimension when māyā recedes. However, in this borderland state they are neither covered nor uncovered.

In this state, they are given a choice to turn toward the spiritual worlds or towards māyā's prison, but, at that time, they have no idea what lies in either direction. Although they have no information, they must choose which way to turn. As an example, we can imagine being lost on a long straight road and coming to a fork in the road. Since we do not know where we are, we also will have no idea where these two roads will take us, and yet we will choose one path.

**The sixth daśa-mula concerns those jīvas who turn away from the Lord.** Having done so, they will immediately become attracted by the illusions of māyā, which start with the false ego concepts of “I”, and “mine”, and “I am the enjoyer”. **This puts them into the category of baddha-jīvas, which means they are bound by the illusions of māyā.** Since there

is no measurement of “when” this bondage began, our ācāryas have translated it as “from time immemorial.” Also, since there is no definite scheduled end to this entrapment, **the jīvas who find themselves caught up in the cycle of material births and deaths are often referred to as “eternally” bound jīvas.**

Fortunately, of course, there can be an end to this cycle.

**Lord Caitanya** explains how this begins:

*While wandering about in the material worlds, some fortunate jīvas receive the seed of bhakti (the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa) by the mercy of Śrī guru or Śrī Kṛṣṇa.*

Once we are brought to the start of the bhakti path, that same uniformed choice we made in the border and—to turn toward Kṛṣṇa or toward māyā—confronts us on a day-by-day, minute-by-minute basis. If we continually make the right choice, our bondage will end, and we will begin to enjoy rasa, the topmost pleasure of all.

**The seventh daśa-mula teaches us about those jīvas who are never bound by māyā, the liberated (mukti) jīvas.** Because the jīvas are eternally (nitya) in their perfect (siddha) forms and identities, they are also known as nitya-siddha-jīvas. This status is secured in one of two ways. **The first group is made up of those jīvas who turn toward Kṛṣṇa in the borderland** (which is not actually a “place”, it is described as a “stream of energy” and it is also a state of consciousness). Since there is no māyā in the spiritual realm, and these jīvas have never had any contact with it, they never fall under the spell of illusions. They remain eternally aware of their position as servants of Kṛṣṇa.

The second group contains jīvas which are expansions of Kṛṣṇa's brother, Lord Balarāma. Lord Balarāma **is Kṛṣṇa**, except He has the mood of being Kṛṣṇa's servant. **In order, to increase the variety of pastimes that Kṛṣṇa can enjoy, Lord Balarāma manifests some jīvas directly in the spiritual world.** He does this on both the topmost spiritual planet Kṛṣṇaloka, and in the other spiritual planets, where He resides in His majestic form.

**The eighth daśa-mula clarifies the relative positions of Kṛṣṇa and the jīvas.** In daśa-mula number five we told you that the essence of both Kṛṣṇa and the jīvas is consciousness, with the difference being the magnitude of this consciousness. **The truth of these similarities and differences was perfectly explained by Lord Caitanya by the doctrine acintya-bhedabhada-tattva, which means the conclusive truth of inconceivable, simultaneous difference and non-difference.**

**He explained that the non-difference lies in the fact that both God and the true you, the soul or svarupa, are equal in quality, that is they are both distinct individuals composed of consciousness that is eternal, aware, and blissful. The difference lies in the quantity of these characteristics.**

**Our ācāryas have explained that when there is simultaneous difference and non-difference, the difference takes precedence.** We can use the classic material example of “comparing apples to oranges” to explain why this is so. Both are fruits, in this way they are the same. But obviously the fact that they are different is a more important consideration. If someone asks for “a fruit”, you could give them either one, but if someone asks for an apple, you can't give them an orange.

We can also use a material example that correlates with the truth of the difference in quantity while being non-different in quality. A huge blazing forest fire and the small flame of a candle are equal in quality, but the size, heat, and what it takes to extinguish them makes them quite different in quantity.

A similar example can also be extended to demonstrate another truth. There are certain types of chemical fires that cannot be extinguished by water, no matter how much is put on it. A small candle flame, on the other hand, can be put out with

just a few drops. God, His expansions, and even the eternally perfect jīvas can never be overcome by māyā, but the eternally bound jīvas are always subject to having their spiritual ambitions extinguished, that is until they also reach the stage of total freedom from the influences of māyā.

**The ninth daśa-mula teaches us about abhideya—that which is most worth of explanation—and this topic is determined to be sādhanā-bhakti.** Again, we will turn to Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura for his simple, yet deep explanation of what sādhanā-bhakti is.

*If bhakti is performed with the material senses by a jīva who is still influenced by the forces of māyā, it is called sādhanā-bhakti. Sādhanā (which translates as “the means used to attain a specific goal”) is the name given to the practice which aims at awakening bhāva (spiritual emotions/the sprout of prema) in the heart. If bhāva is not aroused, one will have to practice sādhanā-bhakti.*

*Sādhanā consists of the efforts of the body, mind, and speech which are designed to awaken bhāva. Sādhanā-bhakti is any method that trains the mind to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. This refers to always remembering Kṛṣṇa and never forgetting Him. All the prohibitions (what must not be done) and duties (what must be done) of scripture and servitors of these two instructions. Thus, duty is that which makes one always remember Kṛṣṇa and prohibitions are those thoughts, words, or deeds that cause one to forget Him.*

Of course, there are many ways to conduct sādhanā-bhakti. The top tier of these practices include hearing about Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, chanting Their names, and associating with Śrī guru. Our hope is that this course has helped you to understand that which is most worthy of explanation and inspired you to seriously follow this path.

**The tenth daśa-mula is the truth that prema is the goal of life.** Starting in the first lesson of this course we’ve shared both the number one rule of bhakti, as given above in the ninth daśa-mula and the fact that prema is the goal of life. Here we will simply remind you once again that prema means prema-bhakti. Our pure love for Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa must be built upon an emotionally driven desire to serve Them.

Along with this, prema requires a sense of possessiveness (mamatā), where we feel “Kṛṣṇa is mine” or “I am His”. This will be felt in unique way depending on which relationship we have with Him. Some will feel, “Kṛṣṇa is my friend”, while others will feel, “I am Kṛṣṇa’s guardian. He is fully dependent upon me.” Those in the topmost relationship will feel, “Kṛṣṇa is my paramour. I will do anything and sacrifice anything, even my own reputation, if it will bring happiness to Kṛṣṇa. I am even willing to sacrifice my very life to ensure that He never suffers in any way.”

So, these ten roots (daśa-mula) are the essence of Lord Caitanya’s teachings. We pray that you feel an ardent desire, a spiritual greed to study and deeply contemplate these truths, while also remembering that they will not penetrate our hearts without the mercy of Śrī guru and/or Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Thus, we should humbly offer our hearts to them, with a sincere prayer that they will remove the illusions that cover and harden it, for it is only the heart that has been softened by the rays of the prema in their hearts that will be able to taste the sweetness of the Divine Couple.

### **Review and Closing**

Since this lesson is a review, there’s no need for us to sum it up here. We do however ask that you do a bit of self-review as well, making the effort to judge for yourself if you have begun to absorb these truths and if you are experiencing positive changes in your life because of your contact with them.

Next month, we’ll finish our review of the first two years of this course and we’ll continue to share the amazing qualities,

associates, and pastimes of the sources of all pleasure, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

**May you develop an unquenchable thirst  
To behold the smiling faces of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.  
We are, the servants of God’s servants,  
The IPBYS Prison Outreach Service Team.  
All glories to Śrīla Gurudeva!**

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