

ALL GLORIES TO SRI GURU AND GAURANGA

The Golden Volcano of Divine Love



By
Srila B.R. Sridhar Maharaj

Diving deep into the reality of His own beauty and sweetness, Krsna stole the mood of Radharani and, garbing Himself in Her brilliant luster, appeared as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Introduction

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu preached the full-fledged theistic conception given in Srimad-Bhagavatam. Srimad Bhagavatam mainly deals with the comparative study of theism and the ontology of Krishna consciousness. It surpasses all other Vedic literatures, even the Puranas. The Brahma-vaivarta Purana and Padma Purana represent the importance of devotion to Krishna through narration and history to some extent, but fall short of the philosophical and ontological standard set by the Mahapurana, Srimad-Bhagavatam. Srimad-Bhagavatam can satisfy all Vedantic scholars, for it represents Krishna consciousness in its fullest dignity. Srimad-Bhagavatam expounds as the highest attainment of theism not consciousness, intelligence, or ontology, but ecstasy, beauty, and harmony-rasa. In Srimad-Bhagavatam, rasa is all-important. It is a unique treatise, for it takes theism from the plane of intellectual jugglery to the domain of rasa.

I once began writing a book which was to be a summary study of the 18,000 verse Srimad-Bhagavatam. Bhaktivinoda Thakura condensed the whole Bhagavata principle into 1,000 verses in his Bhagavatarka-marici-mala. I had a mind to consolidate it even more, to represent it within 300 verses. I began that book, but could not finish it.

Srimad Bhagavatam is a vast treatise in the Sanskrit language, filled with essential information, historical reference, and expositions on the major schools of philosophy. In Srimad-Bhagavatam, many minor points of history and geography are also mentioned which, although nonessential, support its conclusions. Whatever is unnecessary in Srimad-Bhagavatam is eliminated when its meaning reaches its purest and most intensified glory in the teachings of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. So, if we are to consider the very gist of Srimad-Bhagavatam, we must study the life and precepts of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Just as the teachings of the great author of Srimad-Bhagavatam, Srila Vyasadeva, were percolated by the realizations of Sukadeva Goswami, the essence of Srimad-Bhagavatam has been percolated by the life and precepts of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Therefore, because the teachings of Sriman Mahaprabhu represent the gist of Srimad-Bhagavatam, I would like to include here one of the verses I originally composed to introduce my summary study. It glorifies the position of Gadadhara Pandita, the most intimate associate of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Gadadhara Pandita used to read Srimad-Bhagavatam in Jagannatha Puri, at the Tota-Gopinatha temple. He would read, and Sriman Mahaprabhu and the great devotees like Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Raya were his audience:

*nilambhodhi-tate sada sva-virahaksepanvitam bandhavam
srimad-bhagavati katha madiraya sanjivayam bhati yah
srimad-bhagavatam sada sva-nayanasru-payanaih pujayan
gosvami-pravaro gadadhara-vibhur-bhuyat mad-eka-gatih*

"On the shore of the broad blue ocean, Gadadhara Pandita used to read Srimad-Bhagavatam to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who was suffering from the great internal pain of separation from Himself (Krishna). Gadadhara Pandita supplied the wine of krishna-lila to intoxicate his afflicted friend and give Him relief. As he read, tears would fall from his eyes like flower offerings onto the pages of Srimad-Bhagavatam. May the pleasure of that brilliant personality, Gadadhara Pandita, the best of the Goswamis, be my only object in writing this book."

The title of this book is The Golden Volcano of Divine Love. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu felt a great pain of separation from Krishna which burned like fire and was expressed as the Siksastakam. This is explained in Prema Dhama Deva Stotram (54):

*sri-svarupa-rayasanga-gambhirantya-lilanam
dvadasabda-vahni-garbha-vipralambha-silanam
radhikadhirudha-bhava-kanti-krsna-kunjaram
prema-dhama-devam-eva-naum-gaura-sundaram*

"Diving into the reality of His own beauty and sweetness, Krishna stole the mood of Radharani and, garbing Himself in Her brilliant luster, appeared as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. For the last twelve years of His manifest pastimes, He was deeply absorbed in the mood of union and separation and shared His heart's inner feelings with His most confidential devotees. In the agony of separation from Krishna, volcanic eruptions of ecstasy flowed from His heart, and His teachings, known as Siksastakam, appeared from His lips like streams of golden lava. I fall at the feet of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the Golden Volcano of Divine Love."

He was vomiting the fire of painful separation from Krishna in the form of the Siksastakam. Therefore, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is compared to a golden volcano and the Siksastakam is compared to divine lava.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has taught us that separation is the highest principle in divinity. Just as the most intense conception of ecstasy is association with Krishna, the most intense conception of pain is separation from Krishna. Yet the pain felt from Krishna's separation is far more intense than the ecstasy felt from His association. Sriman Mahaprabhu says, "Can't you understand the painful situation you are in? Your senses must have been destroyed? Otherwise you would have died from the pain of separation from Krishna. It is inconceivable. We belong to Him wholesale. He is all in all to us, but we can't see Him. We are forcibly separated from Him. How can we tolerate this?" And Bhaktivinoda Thakura once said, "I can't tolerate separation from Krishna any longer. I can go on for only three or four more days, and then I shall have to leave this body."

To love Krishna means that we shall have to "die to live." In the beginning divine love seems like lava, death, but really it is nectar, life. Many persons in this ordinary world are also frustrated in love. They sometimes go mad and commit suicide because they can't tolerate the pain. But the pain which comes with separation from Krishna, although compared with lava, is not injurious like lava. Kaviraja Goswami explains:

*bahye visajvala haya bhitara anandamaya,
krishna-premara adbhuta carita*

"The wonderful characteristic of divine love of Krishna is that although externally, it works like fiery lava, internally it is like sweet nectar that fills the heart with the greatest joy."

Although He felt the greatest pain of separation from Krishna, still, within His heart, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu experienced the deepest ecstatic joy. The ecstatic symptoms manifested by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu have never been found in the history of the world or even expressed in any scripture. In Him, we find the highest conception of the Ultimate Reality. This is explained in my Prema Dhama Deva Stotram (66):

*atma-siddha-sava-lila-purna-saukhya-laksanam
svanubhava-matta-nrtya-kirtanatma-vantanam
advayaika-laksya-purna-tattva-tat-paratmaram
prema-dhama-devam-eva naumi gaura-sundaram*

"This is the all-conquering conclusion. The highest conception of the Ultimate Reality must also be the highest form of ananda, ecstasy. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is Krishna, ecstasy Himself, tasting His own sweetness and dancing in ecstatic joy. His own holy name is the cause of His ecstasy, expressed as dancing, and the holy name is the effect of His ecstasy, expressed as chanting. The cause is the effect. The dynamo is creating ecstatic energy which makes Him dance, and His chanting distributes that ecstasy to others."

In this way, by every word from His lotus mouth and every gesture and movement of His beautiful golden figure, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu performs His ecstatic pastimes of divine love.

Part 1 The Life of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the Supreme Absolute Truth in its fullest and most dynamic expression. The influence of Radharani over Krsna has transformed Him into a devotee, and He is searching Himself. Krsna - the personification of ecstasy and beauty - is mad in tasting His own internal nectar and His dancing indicates that He is full of ecstasy. And His sankirtana movement is the distribution of that ecstasy to others.

Sripada Nityananda Prabhu

By the grace of Nityananda Prabhu we develop our attraction for Sri Gauranga. Nityananda Prabhu helps us consolidate the foundation which helps us progress further. His mercy sometimes exceeds the mercy of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He won't allow even those who want to avoid Krsna consciousness to escape. If someone says, "I don't want it," Nityananda Prabhu won't allow it. He will say, "No! You must want it. I request you earnestly - take it! Use it and you will be able to feel the value of Krsna consciousness."

1/The Golden Avatar

In the teachings of Karabhajana Rsi we find mention of the different incarnations for different ages (yugavataras). In Dvapara-yuga, the yugavatara is mentioned as follows:

*dvapare bhagavan syamah
pita-vasa nijayudhah
srivatsadibhir ankais ca
laksanair upalaksitah*

In Dvapara-yuga, Lord Krishna appears with the color of a dark rain cloud, wearing lightning-colored garments. He is decorated with beautiful ornaments, His chest bears the mark of Srivatsa, and He carries His own weapons. After the description of the yugavatara of Dvapara-yuga, Karabhajana Rsi mentions of kali-yugavatara:

*iti dvapara urv-isa
stuvanti jagad-isvaram
nana-tantra-vidhanena
kalav api tatha srnu*

He says, "O King, up to Dvapara-yuga, I have finished describing the incarnations for different ages who come to remind the people of the most appropriate duty for their age. They come and tell us, 'If you do this, you will get the greatest benefit.' O King, after the Dvapara age is finished, the age of Kali comes. The incarnation for the age of Kali has been mentioned in many places in the scriptures, and now I am going to explain that information to you." (S.B. 11.5.31)

Then he says:

*krsna-varnam tvisa'krsnam
sangopangastra parsadam
yajnaih sankirtana-prayair
yajanti hi su-medhasah*

In a suppressed way, this verse explains the advent of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. The ordinary of krsna-varnam is "of a black color." But tvisa'krsnam means "His luster is not black." Accompanied by His associates, he is worshiped by the process of sankirtana, the chanting of the holy name of Krishna, and those of sharp intellect will perform this kind of worship.

Golden Gift of the Golden Lord

Jiva Goswami explains the meaning of this verse in his own parallel verse:

*antah krsnam bahir gauram
darsitangadi-vaibhavam
kalau sankirtanadyaih sma
krsna-caitanyam asritah*

"I take shelter of Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is outwardly of a golden complexion, but is inwardly Krishna Himself. In this age of Kali, He displays His expansions while performing congregational chanting of the holy name of Krishna. That he is blackish within means that internally He is Krishna; that He is golden without means that He has accepted the mood of Sri-mati Radharani. In the age of Kali, that Golden Lord is seen accompanied by His expansions, associates, and intimate devotees performing sankirtana."

Someone may argue that the meaning of krsna-varnam is that His color is black and His luster is also black. But how is this possible? That would be redundant. The conjunction between the words tvisa and akrsnam mean that His color is krsna, but his luster is akrsna: not black. Then, someone might say, "Not black does not necessarily mean golden. Why should it mean golden?" The answer is found in Srimad Bhagavatam.

Once Vasudeva sent the astrologer-priest Garga Rsi to Vrndavana to perform the name-giving ceremony for Krishna. At that time, Garga Rsi came to the house of Nanda Maharaja and explained that Vasudeva had sent him. He said, "Your child is now a little grown up and the name-giving ceremony must be performed." At that time, he spoke the following verse:

*asan varnas trayo hy asya
grhnato'nuyugam tanuh
suklo raktas tatha pita
idanim krsnatam gatah*

"In past incarnations, this boy has appeared with different complexions: white, red, and gold, according to the particular age in which He appeared. Now He has assumed this blackish color."

He said, "Krishna comes in a white color in Satya-yuga, red in Treta-yuga, and He also comes with a golden complexion. Now in this Dvapara-yuga He has come in a black color." So the reference to the golden color (pita) is found here, because only that color has been left for this present age of Kali. There is another reference to this golden color in the Upanisads: yada pasyah pasyate rukma varnam: "Krsna, the Supreme Brahman, appears in a golden form." Rukma-varnam means golden. And here also, nonblack means golden."

Krsna wanted to come as the incarnation for this age of Kali, as well as to fulfill His promise in Vrndavana: "I shall chant the glory of the gopis, especially of Radharani. I shall chant Her name, Her glory, and roll in the dust of the earth!" But Radharani said, "I won't allow Your body to roll in the dust of this earth. I shall cover You with My luster." Both the mood as well as the luster of Radharani capture Krishna when He comes here in Kali-yuga. And this does not occur in all Kali-yugas, but only in a special Kali-yuga.

In all the days of Brahma, in every yuga, the yugavatara comes, but Krsna appears only once in a day of Brahma, or once every 4.3 billion years. At that time, the Original Personality of Godhead (svayam bhagavan) appears along with His abodes, Vrndavana and Navadwipa. And Krsna and Mahaprabhu do not come here alone, but They come with Their paraphernalia and suitable companions.

Sweetness Tasting Itself

And in this age of Kali, He performs a double function: He preaches nama-sankirtana, and more important, He assumes the mood of Radharani to taste His own sweetness, rasa. He is rasa Himself. Krishna thinks, "What is the intensity of the finest rasa in Me? I would like to taste that." But only devotees can taste that, so He took the position of Radharani to taste Himself as Krsna, the central, final and perfect abode of rasa. Only Radharani can taste the maximum rasa, so he has to take Her nature, Her mood and temperament to taste His own intrinsic ecstasy. For that reason He descended. His first duty was to spread nama-sankirtana, and the secondary, internal, private duty was to perform svabhajana-vibhajana, to taste His own intrinsic ecstasy in the mood of Radharani. In Puri, with Ramananda Raya, Svarupa Damodara, and other intimate associates, He tasted that great ocean of union in separation continuously for twelve years. In His last twelve years, He passed His time only in the process of tasting that mellow.

That incarnation is generally worshipped by sankirtana. Without sankirtana, Gauranga and His paraphernalia cannot be worshiped. He is the propounder of sankirtana, He loves sankirtana, and

He gets satisfaction only by sankirtana. Only those who have sufficient merit (sukrtivan), will worship Him by this process. The common mob cannot join this campaign. Those who have good guidance internally, good fortune, can catch the very gist of truth and engage in this process of nama-sankirtana.

Love is Supreme

A rubbish-brain cannot detect what is right or wrong, or how precious this is. He cannot understand or follow this higher line of thought. A man should be judged by his ideal, his aspiration for higher things. If the ideal is great, the man is great. What should be the highest ideal? Love. Love is the supreme thing. It is the most rare and precious thing. Divine love and beauty is the highest thing ever known to the world, and those who can catch this are really possessed of good intellect (su-medhasa). And one who possesses this highest ideal should be consider a man of higher order. He alone can understand and practice sankirtana. He alone can take to this path, this process of satisfying the Supreme Being by chanting the holy name of the Lord.

The Hidden Incarnation

This is mentioned in Srimad-Bhagavatam, as well as in the Mahabharata and other Vedic scriptures. Karabhajana Rsi, the last of the nine great yogis, has given us a clue to understand Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu as the special incarnation for the age. He has mentioned the incarnation for this age of Kali in a mystic way. We may think, why has this not been described very plainly? So many avatars are clearly described, but when Srimad-Bhagavatam describes Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu as the incarnation for the age of Kali, it is discussed in a mystic way. The answer is found in the teachings of Prahlada Maharaja, who says, "O Lord, one of Your names is Triyuga, meaning one who incarnates in three ages-Satya, Treta, and Dvapara-but not in Kali. And why? Because the incarnation for the age of Kali is in disguise (channa kalau yad abhavas tri-yugo'tha sa tvam)." Here we find the key to this mystic way of representing Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to the fortunate and intelligent circle (su-medhasah), that ordinary people may not have any clue.

*dhyeyam sada paribhava-ghnam abhista-doham
tirthaspadam siva-virinci-nutam saranyam
bhrtiyarti-ham pranata-pala bhavabdhi-potam
vande maha-purusa te caranaravindam*

"O Mahaprabhu, Your lotus feet are the highest object of meditation, for they not only destroy the pain of material existence, but they bestow the greatest fulfillment to all souls who take shelter beneath them. Your lotus feet even purify all saintly persons and holy places. Lord Siva and Lord Brahma aspire to take shelter beneath Your lotus feet. O Mahaprabhu, You give shelter to all who simply bow down before You. You relieve all the miseries of Your surrendered servants. In the grand ship of Your lotus feet, we can cross over this ocean of material miseries. O Mahaprabhu, I bow down before Your lotus feet."

After mentioning the incarnation of Godhead for the age of Kali, Srimad-Bhagavatam suddenly begins this song in praise of that great yugavatara, Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu. With a grand voice the Bhagavatam has come to sing the praise of that guide for Kali-yuga. This follows the verse which hints at the avatara of Kali-yuga. Krsna-varnam means one who is always descri-

bing Krishna, who always has on his lips the words "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna." Another meaning of this expression is "One who is Krsna Himself, but whose luster is not black." If we look deeply, we shall find that hidden beneath His golden luster is the blackish body of Krishna. With His own paraphernalia He has come to this plane, and service to Him is performed only by sankirtana, divine sound in mass prayer. By that symptom we can recognize His divine position.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is a hidden incarnation; He comes in disguise. Such an avatara is worshiped by the divinely intellectual. In this way, the Srimad-Bhagavatam first describes that uncommon, extraordinary personality, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, in a mystic way and then proclaims His nobility and greatness.

The Srimad-Bhagavatam explains, "That same personality who came as Ramacandra and Krishna has again appeared. He has come to direct you to the real fulfillment of life. He is drawing the sweetest nectar from above for the sake of everyone. Only meditate on Him and all your troubles will be finished. He is the agent purifying all the holy places of pilgrimage and saintly persons by His touch, by His sankirtana, by His drawing the highest things down from the highest plane. And even Brahma and Siva, puzzled by His noble gift, will begin to praise Him. They will eagerly aspire to take shelter under His lotus feet in surrender. The pains of all who come to serve Him will be removed, and their inner necessities will be fulfilled. and He will take care of those who take shelter of Him; they will be given protection as well as everything they may need. In this world where mortality rules, where we are continually experiencing the undesirable changes of repeated birth and death, in this area where no one wants to live, a great ship will come for us and take us within and carry us away from this unpleasant position. Let us fall at the feet of that great personality who comes to give the highest nectar."

The Srimad-Bhagavatam continues:

*tyaktva su-dustyaja-surepsita-rajya-laksmim
dharmistha arya-vacasa yad agad aranyam
maya-mrgam dayitayepsitam anvadhavad
vande maha-purusa te caranaravindam*

"O Supreme Lord, You gave up the goddess of fortune and Her great opulence, which is most difficult to abandon, and is sought after even by the gods. In order to perfectly establish the principles of religion, You left for the forest to honor the brahmana's curse. To deliver the sinful souls who chase illusory pleasures, You search after them and award them Your devotional service. At the same time, You are engaged in search of Yourself, in search for Sri Krishna: reality the beautiful."

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has given his explanation that although it seems that this verse applies to Lord Ramacandra, who left His kingdom and went with Sitadevi to the forest to discharge the duties designed by His father, this also applies to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has drawn out the internal meaning of this verse and applied it in the case of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Tyaktva su-dustyaja-surepsita-rajya-laksmim means he left imperial prosperity which is hard to abandon. Generally we find this in the case of Lord Ramacandra, but Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says that surepsita-rajya-laksmim means the valuable devotional company of Visnupriya-devi. That may not appear to be a materially big thing, but the dedication that Visnupriya has shown in Her heart for Sriman Mahaprabhu is greater than any imperial standard. And He had to leave that behind. Such a standard of sacrifice and service is never found even among the great society of the gods. For the sake of the public welfare, He had to ignore the serving, loving attitude of Visnupriya.

The Curse of a Brahmana

This verse mentions the curse of a brahmana. That brahmana told Sriman Mahaprabhu, "I want to participate in your nocturnal kirtanas in which You taste krsna-lila, but the doors are closed." When Sriman Mahaprabhu used to perform kirtana and taste the vraja-lila of Krsna, He did so behind closed doors in deep night. But this brahmana thought himself a very qualified, religious person because he lived by only drinking milk and nothing else, so he said, "I must have entrance into that kirtana. I do not eat anything but milk; why should I not be allowed?" Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu replied, "Milk drinking is no qualification for entering into Krishna consciousness." The brahmana said, "Then I curse You to lose your family life!" "All right," Mahaprabhu said and accepted the curse. And later He took sannyasa and chased after those who were misguided by Mayadevi in order to save them. At the same time, although He is Krishna, He accepted the mood of Srimati Radharani. For these two reasons, He left His apparently worldly life: He acted for the welfare of the public and, after finishing that work, spent the next twelve years tasting the very inner aspiration of Srimati Radharani and searching after His own inner sweetness. This was what he came to show to the world. In this mystic way, Srimad Bhagavatam has proclaimed the magnanimous appearance of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

2/A Mysterious Incarnation

After Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took sannyasa, He went to live in Jagannatha Puri. There, He converted the greatest scholar of the day, Sarvabhauma Bhattacarya. After meeting Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the great scholar Sarvabhauma Bhattacarya questioned his brother-in-law Gopinatha Acarya about the avatara of the present age Kali-yuga. Gopinatha had been living in Navadvipa, and he was a follower of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. In his own way, Sarvabhauma began to praise Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu as a beautiful man and a great scholar.

"I have great attraction for Him," he said, "But I don't think it wise that at such a young age He has taken sannyasa, the renounced order of life. He has such a long life ahead of Him; how will He be able to keep up the dignity of the life of a sannyasi, a life of renunciation? I can't sit by and do nothing. I like this boy very much. I shall have to help Him as a guardian, so that He may not lose His prestige by giving up sannyasa, attracted by the fascination of worldly pleasures."

Gopinatha could not tolerate all this guardian-like advice. He told Sarvabhauma, "This young man, who is very beautiful, charming, and scholarly, has attracted your attention, and you want to become His guardian to keep up the purity of His life. Do you think you will have to help Him? What do you mean by saying all these things? Don't you know that He is really the incarnation of Godhead for this age? He is the avatara for Kali-yuga; He inaugurated the yuga-dharma of nama-sankirtana in Navadvipa, and His appearance is mentioned in the scriptures." Sarvabhauma replied, "No, no! You are not talking to an ordinary person. Don't think that you can say whatever you like and I will accept it. I am a hard nut to crack. What are you saying? There is no Kali-yuga-avatara. One of the names of Visnu mentioned in the Visnu-sahasra-nama in the Mahabharata is Triyuga, 'The Lord who appears only in three ages.' That means that the Lord has no incarnation in Kali-yuga except Kalki, who is a pastime incarnation and not the yugavatara, the incarnation for the age." Gopinatha replied, "You think yourself so learned, but although you have studied all the scriptures, and are so proud of your learning, the Mahabharata and Srimad-

Bhagavatam are the main scriptures of the followers of eternal religious principles, and still you have no particular knowledge about that."

"Not Man-but God"

At that time, Gopinatha Acarya quoted passages from the Srimad Bhagavatam and Mahabharata (krsna-varnam tvisa'krsnam, suvarna varna hemango). In this way, he pressed his point: "Here we find the direct avatara for the age of Kali. He has appeared to spread nama-sankirtana. He is not a man, but the Supreme Lord, Krsna Himself." Sarvabhauma said, "No, no. Go away. Mind your own business. Don't think that you can instruct me." And in this way they argued.

Later, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya told Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, "I would like to teach You Vedanta philosophy, so that You can keep up the standard of Your renunciation. I will teach You that this world is nothing, so that You never feel any charm to again enter into mundane life." Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, "Yes, you are My guardian. Whatever you say, I must do. I will come and learn Vedanta philosophy from you at whatever time is suitable for you.

Then Gopinatha Acarya told Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, "Sarvabhauma is saying this because he doesn't know Your real identity." Sriman Mahaprabhu replied, "Why are you speaking against him? He is My guardian. He was My father's classmate, so he has great affection for Me. It is out of affection that he poses himself as My guardian and looks after My welfare. I don't find any fault in that."

Seven Days of Silence

In a few days, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu began to hear Vedanta from Sarvabhavana Bhattacharya, and as Sarvabhauma would speak, He would remain silent like a good boy, as if He were hearing with a submissive attitude. But after he had been teaching Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu for seven days, Sarvabhauma had some doubt in his mind. He thought, "What is the matter" I am such a great scholar in Vedanta and logic, and I am trying my best with all my intelligence to put before Him the inner meaning of Vedanta, but I draw no response from Him. He is only quietly attending my discourse as if He is deaf and dumb. And I can't say that He does not understand me, for He has a sharp intellect. I am sure of this, but still He gives no appreciation, no response whatsoever. He raises no question and gives no indication whether He understands or not-noting of the kind. Then what am I doing?" He could not keep himself any longer. He put the question straight to the Lord: "For more than seven days I have been explaining the inner meaning of Vedanta to You. Many sannyasis come to me to learn about Vedanta, but You don't have any question about my talk, my explanation? You maintain a strange and wonderful silence. What is the reason?"

Atheistic Scholarship

Then, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu revealed Himself. He said, "Sarvabhauma, what you explain is on the basis of Sankara's philosophy, but I heard that it was by the order of the Lord that Sanka-

racarya concealed the real purpose of Vedanta. Its author, Vyasadeva, is a completely theistic person, and he has prepared this Vedanta, but what you say is all based on atheistic scholarship."

Sarvabhauma was a very intelligent man. He realized, "In a very gentle way, he wants to tell me that what I am explaining is all bogus. I am laboring diligently to explain Vedanta to my utmost capacity for the last seven days, and now He shows His true colors and says that what I am explaining is all false. What is he saying?" Still, in a gentlemanly way, Sarvabhauma with some hesitation asked Sriman Mahaprabhu, "You say that what I have been explaining for the last seven days is all unsubstantial and unreal. Then can You give the proper meaning? If this is all improper and false, then what is the real meaning of Vedanta?" Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu humbly replied, "If you order Me to explain Vedanta, I will try. The sutras or codes of Vedanta are lustrous in themselves. They are self-evident. The proper reading of the sutras leads towards Parabrahman, Krishna." Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu began with this introduction. He said that Srimad-Bhagavatam is the real explanation and commentary on Vedanta. It is mentioned in the Garuda Purana:

*artho'yam brahma sutranam
bharatartha-vinirnayah
gayatri bhasya rupo 'sau
vedarthah paribrimhitah*

"Srimad Bhagavatam represents the real purport of Vedanta-sutra. And although it is very difficult to draw out the real purpose of the one hundred thousand verse epic Mahabharata, the great history of the world, Srimad Bhagavatam has come to give its real meaning. The mother of all Vedic knowledge is the Gayatri mantra. Srimad-Bhagavatam gives the gist of Gayatri in a very full-fledged way. And the supplementary truths of the Vedas are also found within Srimad-Bhagavatam." Therefore, Vedanta must be explained in the line of the truth which has been expressed in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. Only then can the real meaning be understood.

The Aspiration of Liberated Souls

When Sriman Mahaprabhu mentioned Srimad-Bhagavatam, Sarvabhauma, being a learned pandita could not deny its validity. He said, "Yes, I also like Srimad-Bhagavatam. And I especially like this one very beautiful verse. At that time, Sarvabhauma, to regain lost prestige, began to explain the atmarama verse of Srimad-Bhagavatam:

*atmaramas ca munayo
nirgrantha apy urukrame
kurvanty ahaitukim bhaktim
ittham-bhuta guno harih*

"Even liberated souls fully satisfied in the self are irresistibly attracted by the superexcellent qualities of Krishna and surrender to Him with unalloyed devotion."

Sarvabhauma explained this verse in nine different ways, while Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, as before, sat silently hearing. After he had finished his explanation, Sarvabhauma thought that he had regained his position to a certain extent. Still, as a courtesy, he asked Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, "Are You satisfied with this explanation? If You can give any more light to this verse, I will listen to that." Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu told him, "If you order me, I may try." Then He

gave eighteen different types of explanations of that verse, leaving aside the nine already given by Sarvabhauma.

At that time, while listening to the explanation of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Sarvabhauma gradually saw that he was losing his position. His pride was finished. Astounded, He thought, "This youth, this young boy, is not an ordinary person. No ordinary intellect can refute my arguments. Leaving aside all of my attempts to explain this verse, He gave eighteen wonderful explanations of this particular verse. What is this? Such consistent, irresistible, devotional, and beautiful explanations are coming, superseding all those that with great energy and effort I explained. No human being can surpass my explanations. No human intellect can cross mine. This is a different sort of explanation. It is all-encompassing. But it is coming from this young boy? What is This?"

Mystic Revelation

Gradually, he lost his faith in himself and became baffled. And he recalled how Gopinatha Acarya had said that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was not a human being and thought, "It is not possible for a human to explain things in this way-it is something supernatural. Then Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu revealed to Sarvabhauma His spiritual position as Narayana and Krishna combined. In a trance, Sarvabhauma saw all these things and fell at the Lord's feet, and almost completely lost consciousness.

When he arose from his trance, he found that boy still sitting there like a student with great humility. Then Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu asked him, "May I go for today?" Sarvabhauma said, "Yes, you may go now." The Lord went away, and Sarvabhauma remained there. After some time, he recovered, and began to think, "What have I seen? Four-handed Narayana, then Krishna playing the flute! I was not defeated by a man-that is my solace. Sarvabhauma become a changed man and composed two verses:

*vairagya-vidya-nija-bhakti-yoga-
siksartham ekah purusah puranah
sri-krsna-caitanya-sarira-dhari
krpambudhir yas tam aham prapadye*

"I surrender unto the lotus feet of Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is an ocean of mercy. He is the Original Personality of Godhead, Krishna, and has descended to teach us the real meaning of knowledge, renunciation, and devotion to Him."

*kalan nastam bhakti-yogam nijam yah
praduskartum krsna-caitanya-nama
avirbhutas tasya padaravinde
gadham gadham liyatam citta-bhrngah*

"Let the honeybee of my mind dive deep into the lotus feet of Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna Himself. He has appeared to revive the path of unalloyed devotion, which had almost become lost due to the influence of time."

A Taste Supreme

These two verses were composed by Sarvabhauma Bhattacarya expressing that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is the Supreme Lord Himself. The next day, early in the morning, Sriman Mahaprabhu, with some prasadam from the Jagannatha temple, ran to Sarvabhauma while he was still in bed. He cried in a loud voice, "Sarvabhauma-How wonderful is this prasadam! It has a very extraordinary taste. Please take it. I have come for you with this prasadam." Sarvabhauma arose from bed as Mahaprabhu offered him the prasadam, and he could not but accept it without cleansing his mouth. Ordinarily a brahmana pandita, early in the morning, will first cleanse his mouth, bathe, offer different prayers, and only then take prasadam. But when Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu personally came and offered it to him with His own hand, what could Sarvabhauma do? He had to accept that prasadam. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu told him, "We have previously experienced the taste of so many things like ghee, rice, sweets, and spices. We all know what flavors they have, but this is wonderful. This has touched the lips of Krishna Himself. It is extraordinarily wonderful and tasteful." Then, Sarvabhauma eagerly ate that prasadam and began uttering some mantras:

*suskam paryusitam vapi
nitam va dura-desatah
prapti-matrena bhoktavyam
natra kala-vicarana*

"One should take the maha-prasada of Sri Krishna as soon as one receives it, without consideration of time or place, even though it may be dried up, stale, or brought from a distant country."

*na desa-niyamas tatra
na kala-niyamas tatha
praptam annam drutam sistair
bhoktavyam harir abravat*

"The prasada of Sri Krsna is to be taken by gentleman as soon as it is received, without hesitation. There are no regulative principles concerning time and place. This is the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

"Today, I Have Conquered The World"

He took prasadam, and the Lord and servant embraced one another and began to dance in ecstasy. As they danced, the symptoms of ecstasy appeared in both of them. They perspired, trembled, and shed tears. Absorbed in ecstatic love, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, "Today, I have conquered the whole world, for I have converted a scholar like Sarvabhauma Bhattacarya. Now, he has so much faith in maha-prasada that without performing any Vedic rituals, he took the prasadam. My mission is successful!"

From that day on, Sarvabhauma Bhattacarya knew nothing but the lotus feet of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and could only explain the scriptures with the conclusions of devotion. Seeing that Sarvabhauma had become a follower of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Gopinatha Acarya began to clap his hands and dance. He said, "Well, Sarvabhauma, what do you think now?" Sarvabhauma

replied, "Gopinatha, you are my real friend, for it is by your grace that I received the mercy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu."

3/Friend of the Fallen

Although it is the duty of justice to seek qualifications, mercy has no such limits. Divine mercy does not care for any qualifications, but is always ready to compensate the weak and unfit. Only one thing is required: our sincere eagerness to receive mercy. In Caitanya-caritamṛta it is said:

*kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvita matih
kriyatam yadi kuto'pi labhyate
tatra laulyam api mulyam ekalam
janma-koti-sukṛtair na labhyate*

"Pure devotional service to Krishna cannot be obtained by performing pious activities even for millions of births. It can be purchased only by paying one price: intense eagerness. Wherever it is available, one must purchase it immediately." No qualifications from one's previous life will help one to attain Krishna consciousness; only eagerness and faith are important.

And what is the effect of Krishna consciousness?

*bhidyate hṛdaya-granthis
chidyante sarva-samsayah
ksiyante casya karmani
mayi drste'khilatmani*

"Our inner aspiration for rasa, ecstasy, is buried in the heart and the heart is tied down and sealed. But hearing and chanting the glories of Krishna breaks the seal of the heart, and the heart awakens and opens to receive Krishna: the reservoir of pleasure, ecstasy Himself (raso vai sah, akhila rasamṛta murtih)."

The Heart Wants Ecstasy

Our heart's concern is with ecstasy, charm, and sweetness. And this is felt by the heart, not by the brain, so the heart has been given the most importance. The next effect is felt in the plane of knowledge. After getting a taste of divine sweetness, suspicion vanishes (rasa-varjam raso'pyasya param drstva nivartate). When we have a taste of real ecstasy (rasa), then all doubts are cleared. By getting a taste of Krishna consciousness, the heart is captured and when the heart is captured, the ecstasy of love of Godhead, prema, begins to flow. Being satisfied, the heart will say, "This is what I was searching for!" Then, the brain will follow, thinking, "Yes, there can be no doubt, this is the highest goal of our search. Dissolve everything else." The heart will say, "I have attained prema, divine love-this is the highest thing! Stop all works from now on." Then, karma will close all its workshops. After coming in touch with Krishna consciousness, the first result is that the heart awakens. When the heart is captured, the brain approves, and our karma, energizing in the wrong direction, stops. Krishna consciousness is the real wealth of the heart.

It is the nature of divine mercy to extend itself without caring for any law. The only consideration is our eagerness to accept it. Mercy is offered in this way: "Do you want this?" If we simply agree, "Yes, it is wonderful and most tasteful," then can we have it. If our prayer is genuine, then nothing else is required. It is a simple transaction. If we want it, we will get it. Krishna consciousness is most simple. Whether one is fit or unfit is unimportant. Anyone who simply wants it may have it.

And what of those who don't want this divine gift? For them, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu distributed special mercy through His most magnanimous canvassing agent, Sripada Nityananda Prabhu. Nityananda Prabhu won't allow even those who want to avoid Krishna consciousness to escape. If someone says, "I don't want it," Nityananda Prabhu won't allow it. He will say, "No! You must want it. I request you earnestly-take it! Use it and you will be able to feel the value of Krishna consciousness."

To capture the market, a clever merchant may distribute free samples of his product to his customers, saying, "Take one free! There is no question of paying any price now. I am giving this away. Use it, and if you feel the value, the utility of my product-buy it." And then afterwards everyone will purchase.

"Please Accept Gauranga!"

In a similar way, Nityananda Prabhu traveled throughout Bengal making His humble appeal. Nityananda Prabhu would knock at the door and fall at the feet of His customers, crying, "Please accept this! Don't dismiss Me, don't drive me away. Please do what I say. Give all your attention to Gauranga and you will be benefited beyond expectation. This is My request to you." He would shed tears, roll at their door, and say, "You are reluctant to accept this, but have no doubts. I implore you-take it! Believe Me. Please accept Gauranga!" In this way, Nityananda Prabhu used to wander down both sides of the Ganges, roaming here and there and preaching about Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Nityananda Prabhu knows only Gauranga. He is represented in krsna-lila as Baladeva. Baladeva apparently performed the rasa-lila, but at heart was only arranging rasa-lila for Krishna: His nature shows the experts of devotion that He is always dedicated to Krishna. Otherwise He would not be Baladeva. He has no individual thoughts for His own enjoyment; every atom of His body is always eager to make arrangements for the enjoyment of Krishna. In a similar way, every atom of the body of Nityananda Prabhu is conscious transcendental substance. And every atom of His body is meant only for the service and satisfaction of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

"Come Down From Your Throne!"

One day, Mahaprabhu's mother, Sacidevi, had a dream that Krishna and Balarama were on a throne and Nityananda Prabhu was addressing Baladeva, "Come down from Your throne! Your days are over. Now My Lord Gauranga will be installed." Baladeva refused: "No. I have My Lord-Krishna." There was a fight, but Nityananda Prabhu was stronger and He took Baladeva down from the throne, saying, "Your day has gone. Now the time for My master, Gauranga, has come. You are a trespasser, a usurper-You must come down." And Baladeva could not defeat Nityananda, who took Him down from the throne.

This is the nature of Nityananda Prabhu's relationship with Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He has nothing of his own; His everything is Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. As Baladeva is to Krishna, Nityananda Prabhu is to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. The aim of Sriman Mahaprabhu's descent was to distribute the devotional service of Vrndavana most generously. On the other hand, Nityananda Prabhu used to sing, "Bhaja gauranga, kaha gauranga laha gauranger nama, yei jana gauranga bhaje sei amara prana: worship Gauranga, speak of Gauranga, chant Gauranga's name. Whoever worships Sri Gauranga is my life and soul." Nityananda Prabhu tried His best to make the people at large accept Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. What did He say? "Come straight to the campaign of Sri Caitanya and you will safely attain Vrndavana."

Of course, Navadwipa, the abode of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, is no less valuable than Vrndavana, the abode of Krishna. The same rasa which is found in Vrndavana is present in another feature in Navadwipa. Some devotees have a special attraction for vrndavana-lila, others have a special attraction for navadwipa-lila, and a third group represents both camps, but Navadwipa is the most generous. In Vrndavana, the pastimes of Krishna are confined to a confidential circle, but in Navadwipa, those pastimes are distributed. Gaura-lila is more generous than krsna-lila.

In the Caitanya-caritamṛta (Mad. 25.271), Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswami explains his conception of the difference between gaura-lila and kṛṣṇa-lila:

*kṛṣṇa-lila amṛta-sara, tara sata sata dhara,
dasa-dike vahe yaha haite
se caitanya-lila haya, sarovara aksaya,
mano-hamsa caraha' tahate*

He says, "There is no doubt that we find the highest nectarine taste of rasa in kṛṣṇa-lila. But what is gaura-lila? In gaura-lila, the nectar of kṛṣṇa-lila is not confined to a limited circle, but is being distributed on all sides. It is just as if from all ten sides of the nectarine lake of kṛṣṇa-lila hundreds of streams are flowing."

Our highest aspiration is to achieve the service of Srimati Radharani, but in the beginning, we must approach Sri Nityananda Prabhu through his manifest representation, the guru. Nityananda Prabhu consolidates the foundation which helps us progress further in devotion. Quick progress without a good foundation invites a negative reaction, so the mercy of Nityananda Prabhu is our primary necessity. This approach culminates in the service of Srimati Radharani (nitaiyer-karuna habe braje radha-kṛṣṇa pabe).

To be reinstated as a servant of the servant to the extreme degree is the philosophy of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Our goal is not to become one with Krishna-to receive service-we want to render service. The predominated moiety of the Absolute Truth is negative potency-the energy that serves-and the predominating moiety receives that service. Our best interest will be reached when, according to our constitutional nature, we attain our position in the line of servitors in the negative, predominated moiety; not by considering ourselves one with the positive, predominating moiety.

By the grace of Nityananda Prabhu, we develop our attraction for Sri Gauranga. If we receive the grace of Sri Gauranga, we receive everything in the highest degree. And that is the safest way to approach Radha-Govinda. If we try to achieve Radha-Govinda in some other way, our attempt will naturally be artificial and defective; if we approach Radha-Govinda directly, avoiding Sri Gauranga, there will be great difficulty.

An Investment in Navadvipa

Therefore, we should invest all our energy in the service of Sri Gauranga. Then, we shall automatically find ourselves being lifted towards the highest level. Prabhodananda Saraswati Thakura prays:

*yatha yatha gaura padaravinde
vindeta bhaktim kṛta punya rasih
tatha tathotsarpati hr̥dy akasmat
radha padambhoja sudhambhurasih*

As much as we devote ourselves to the lotus feet of Sri Gauranga, we will automatically achieve the nectarine service of Srimati Radharani in Vr̥ndavan. An investment in Navadvipa Dhama will automatically take one to Vr̥ndavana. How one has been carried there will be unknown to him. But those who have good fortune invest everything in the service of Gauranga. If they do that, they will find that everything has automatically been offered to the divine feet of Srimati Radharani. She will accept them in Her confidential service and give them some engagement, saying, "Oh, you have a good recommendation from Navadvipa; I immediately appoint you to this service." Srimati Radharani is introduced in the form of Gauranga with the added element of magnanimity. No selfish sensualism can enter our consideration of the pastimes of Sri Gauranga, for there He appears as a sannyasi and a devotee.

Of course, if we are to analyze Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu, we shall find Kṛṣṇa in the garb of Radharani. According to the impersonal philosophers, when negative and positive combine, they become non-differentiated oneness, but Vaiṣṇava philosophy says that when both positive and negative aspects of Godhead are combined, personality is not lost. Rather, in the garb of the negative, the positive is converted and begins searching for Himself in the mood of the highest searcher. According to Vaiṣṇavism, when positive and negative combine, they do not create equilibrium; rather their dynamic character is always maintained. The combination of Radha and Govinda is Sri Gauranga, and by the grace of Nityānanda Prabhu, we may be attracted to Sri Gauranga.

All-embracing Mercy

Nityānanda Prabhu's mercy sometimes exceeds the mercy of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Because it may create a bad precedent, Mahāprabhu sometimes cannot accept certain fallen souls—He has to consider their status as well as other things. Nityānanda Prabhu's mercy, however, does not care for any unfavorable circumstances; His mercy is very lavish and almost blind. He does not discriminate between different degrees of sinners. His mercy is all-embracing. And Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu cannot dismiss His recommendation. Even those who Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu rejected, Nityānanda Prabhu sheltered, and gradually Mahāprabhu had to accept them. So the grace of Nityānanda is the greatest both in magnitude and circumference, and that is our solace, for by His mercy even the most fallen souls can attain the supreme goal.

Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu once told His followers, "Even if Nityānanda Prabhu is found with a fallen girl of the lowest kind, drinking wine in a wine shop, still you should know that He is abo-

ve all these things. Although you may find Him apparently engaged in lower activities, He is never implicated. He may appear connected with so many fallen activities, but you should know that He is always revered by the creator of the universe, Lord Brahma, and other exalted devotees. Nityananda Prabhu's mercy is so powerful that if one simply takes a piece of His loincloth and wears it respectfully on his body, he will be saved from all the disturbances of the mundane senses." Therefore we pray, "May my mind always stick to His holy feet; I offer my obeisances to Sri Nityananda Prabhu."

Swallowed By Maya

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took sannyasa for the benefit of those souls swallowed by maya. He ran and chased after the fallen souls to deliver them from illusion by giving them the holy name of Krishna, and Nityananda Prabhu, like His shadow, ran after Him wherever he went. He fully surrendered and identified Himself with Mahaprabhu's cause. So we must bow down to Nityananda Prabhu. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was merged in tasting the sweetness of Radha-Govinda lila, and diving deep into that reality, however, at the same time, He wanted to deliver all souls whose hearts had not been devoured by the false notions of renunciation and exploitation, He ordered Nityananda Prabhu, "Go to Bengal and try to deliver them-give them divine love for Radha and Krishna."

He ordered Nityananda Prabhu to distribute divine love for Radha-Govinda, but instead, Nityananda began to preach about Sri Gauranga. He thought, "It will be better for them to worship Gauranga; that will help free them from their offenses in their present condition, and by doing so, they will automatically achieve a position in Radha-Govinda lila." he was ordered to preach the name of Krishna, but instead began to preach the name of Gauranga. So, for our own welfare, we bow down to Nityananda Prabhu with all our humility.

We pray, "O Nityananda Prabhu, O gurudeva, please give me a drop of firm faith in Sri Gauranga, who is Radha-Govinda combined, tasting the sweetness of the divine nectar of the pastimes of Vrndavana. Give me a drop of faith, so that one day I may attain divine love and enter into that domain."

If we neglect Nityananda Prabhu and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, our aspiration to serve Radha-Govinda will be a dream, an abstract imagination without reality. Nityananda Prabhu is the refuge of all fallen souls. He is the most generous-hearted aspect of guru-tattva; we must bow down our head to Him, accept His holy feet, and surrender to Him.

In the spiritual realm of Vaikuntha, Nityananda Prabhu is represented as Sankarsana, the Supreme Lord who is considered to be the foundation of everything in existence. All possible existence is maintained by His energy. Nityananda Prabhu is the original Baladeva, the Personality of Godhead. Therefore, we should view the pastimes of Nityananda Prabhu with full consciousness of His dignified position, although He used to roam about here and there, rolling in the dust with tears in His eyes, saying, "Take the name of Gauranga and I will be sold to you." Although He posed in this lower position, still, He should be considered in light of His actual dignified position. We must surrender to Him with that attitude.

Balarama is represented in different parts of the spiritual world in different aspects. He came here as Nityananda Prabhu with Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. The truth about Nityananda Prabhu has been exhaustively explained in Caitanya-caritamrta and Caitanya-bhagavata. There, He is

described as enjoying His life and relishing His pastimes with His own younger brother. To that Nityananda, we must bow our heads.

Sri Krishna prema, divine love, is an inconceivable substance which is very pleasing and ecstatic. Great saints who get a taste of that wonderful substance throw away all sorts of aspirations, including salvation, which is lavishly praised by the Vedas. So Nityananda Prabhu, although one with Baladeva, is greater than Him? Why? He is distributing divine love.

What is divine love? It is so important and valuable, so much higher than all other sorts of achievements, that one who can give divine love is far superior to those who can give duty, wealth, pleasure, and even salvation (dharma, artha, kama, moksa). If we conceive that Krishna is subordinate to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, then of course Balarama is subordinate to Nityananda Prabhu. In all other respects the two of Them are similar, but when magnanimity is added to Balarama, He becomes Nityananda Prabhu.

First, the position of divine love must be established: the great saints discard salvation and other things after they get a slight scent of divine love. Once the position of divine love is established, we can understand that one who can give it must necessarily be superior to the givers of all other things.

So Nityananda Balarama is superior to Karanodakasayi Visnu, the Supersoul of the collective universes, Garbhodakasayi Visnu, the Supersoul of this universe; and Ksirodakasayi Visnu, the Supersoul of all living beings. And that Balarama has come here as Nityananda Prabhu-not with majesty, grandeur, or power, but in a human form-to distribute divine love. And He is the giver of Gauranga. His greatness is proved by this fact. We can understand this by further examining the different aspects of his life, step by step.

Nityananda Prabhu was born in Ekacakra, and there He passed His early life. his parents, friends and neighbors were filled with ecstatic joy, being pleased with His sweet infant pastimes. From His birth, He was a pleasure to the whole atmosphere of Ekacakra, and in this joyful atmosphere He passed his childhood years.

One day, while Nityananda was still young, a sannyasi came to His home and begged Him from His parents. The sannyasi was roaming about to different holy places and he prayed for Nityananda as his alms. He took Him in his company and Nityananda Prabhu wandered about almost all the holy places, following that sannyasi. It is said that the sannyasi was Madhavendra Puri.

Then one day, from within, feeling ecstasy in His heart, Nityananda Prabhu could understand that Sri Gauranga had begun His pastimes of sankirtana in Navadvipa Dhama.

An Extraordinary Dream

That day, Mahaprabhu told His followers, "I had a dream that an extraordinarily great man, in a chariot marked with the palm tree flag of Balarama, came to my door and said, 'Where is the house of Nimai Pandita?' Twice, thrice, four times-again and again-He keeps saying, 'Where is the house of Nimai Pandita?'" Mahaprabhu continued, "That great personage must have come last night to Navadvipa. Try to search Him out." They searched and searched, but could not find Him anywhere.

Then Mahaprabhu told them, "Let Me try." He took them straight to the home of Nandanacarya, and when Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu with His followers suddenly arrived there, they found Nityananda Prabhu sitting on the veranda. After seeing Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu stared intently at Him for some time, became absorbed in Him, and fainted. In this way, in one day, He became the most intimate associate of Sriman Mahaprabhu. When He was ordered by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to everyone, He began to distribute Gauṛāṅga consciousness, divine love of Sri Gaurāṅga. That Nityananda Prabhu is the savior of all fallen souls, without any discrimination of the degree of their fallenness, so we bow down to His holy feet.

Once, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu had a secret talk with Nityananda Prabhu in Jagannatha Puri. When Nityananda Prabhu went to Bengal and married, some say that Mahaprabhu asked Him to marry. It is our opinion that because the so-called "high class" people were so much surcharged with vanity, Nityananda Prabhu was asked to approach the masses. Because he was ordered to mix with them very familiarly for His preaching purposes, it was found necessary for Him to marry. Otherwise, if he were to have mixed very familiarly with family men, accusations may have been leveled at His standard of renunciation. And to further that purpose, He married. He had to adopt that policy and accept that attitude. And He may have been told to do so by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu; it was not His own decision. Of course, marrying or not marrying was nothing to Him.

How he came in contact with His eternal consort, Jahnava-devi is described in the Bhakti-ratna-kara. It appears that when He was preaching all around Bengal, He preached at the house of Jahnava-devi's father, Suryadasa Pandita, the brother of Gauridasa Pandita, who was already a follower of Gaura-Nityananda. Suryadasa gave Him intimate help in His propaganda work, as his house was a good base. And Suryadasa, who had two daughters, offered Nityananda Prabhu his daughter in marriage. Ultimately, Srila Nityananda Prabhu and Srimati Jahnava-devi are eternally associated, and although their marriage apparently took place out of necessity, it was actually part of Their eternal lila.

Of course, some so-called sannyasis take advantage of this to give up their bows of celibacy and marry. They give the marriage of Nityananda as an excuse. But it is not a proven fact that Nityananda Prabhu was a sannyasi. Actually, the name "Nityananda" is a brahmacari name. "Ananda" is a suffix added to the name of a brahmacari. Ananda, Svarupa, Prakasa, and Caitanya are different types of brahmacari names. The name Ananda is also found in the sannyasa order of life, but we find no sannyasa title mentioned for Nityananda Prabhu. There is also no mention anywhere of a sannyasa guru for Nityananda Prabhu, although we know that His dikṣa guru was Madhavendra Puri, the guru of Advaita Prabhu and Isvara Puri.

Nityananda Prabhu is known as an avadhuta. Avadhuta does not mean a sannyasi, but one who is not very particular about his external practices and sometimes does things which should not be done. When an exalted person is seen engaging in lower practices, he is considered an avadhuta. It is understood that he is above that, but his practices are of a lower nature. Ava means lower, and dhuta means that he can either remove or purify.

Nityananda Prabhu broke the single sannyasa staff (ekadanda) into three; that indicates that when taking sannyasa, the renounced order of life, we should accept not one, but three dandas, which symbolize the dedication of body, mind, and words in the service of the Lord. And Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Prabhupada was also inspired by this action of Nityananda Prabhu's to give tridandi sannyasa to his followers, in contrast to ekadanda which was formerly current in Bengal. The system of tridandi sannyasa as the custom in Southeast India with the

Vaishnavas who follow Ramanujacarya, and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta introduced it for the modern age.

Misconception: Attack it-Crush it!

Nityananda Prabhu's approach was somewhat peculiar. His strategy was to uplift the most fallen. Like Napoleon, whose policy was to attack the strongest position of the opposing army, Nityananda Prabhu wanted to capture the most sinful. Generally, we think that a saint flies away from this world of maya and goes to a solitary place where he can enter into a cave and engage himself in meditation. Indian saints generally preach, "Give up everything, go to a solitary place in the jungle, find a cave, and engage yourself fully in understanding Godhead." But our guru maharaja was different. Like Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu, he wanted to attack maya and, like a great general, he declared totalitarian war on illusion and even all other existing conceptions of religion. "Why is there this misunderstanding and misconception?" he thought, "Everything belongs to Krishna: *isavasyam idam sarvam*. It is plain and simple and sweet. How can we think, 'This is for me, that is for Him?' Why should we let this misconception stand here at all? Attack it-and crush the whole thing!"

He told us, "Kirtana means to preach against misconception. As soldiers, you must go door to door and preach Krishna consciousness-Krishna's interest-the Krishna conception. If they understand that everything is for Krishna, they will be saved. This truth is plain and simple. Why should they not understand this? Try to capture them, to release them from the world of misconception and misunderstanding where they are now suffering from reaction."

In this way, we are not afraid of anything. A Vaishnava who loved solitary life once asked our Guru Maharaja, "Why do you stay at Calcutta? That is the place of Satan, where fighting for selfish interest is so acute. Leave that-come to the holy dhama." But Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura especially chose that place, saying, "I prefer to represent Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's creed in an extremely contaminated place." For this reason, he wanted to send men to the West. "The East is captured by the glamour of Western civilization," he said, "so Western civilization must first be crushed. Then, its glamour will vanish and the whole world will come to join the campaign of divine love of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu." This was the same spirit with which Nityananda Prabhu canvassed the fallen souls of this world, in His attempt to take them to the lotus feet of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

4/Mad Nimai Pandita

At the time of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's advent, Bengal had fallen far away from Krishna consciousness. The people of the day had become so much degraded that they would pass their time spending money like water to see the marriage of cats. Deviating from the worship of the Supreme Lord, Krishna, they used to worship the serpent-goddess, Visahari, or the controller of the demons, Kali. Very rarely would the name of Krishna be heard from their lips. Only a few of the Hindu gentleman, when bathing in the Ganges, would chant the holy name of Govinda, Hari, or Krishna. And Navadvipa Dhama, place of the advent of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, was under Mohammedan rule in those days. The Kazi was in power in Navadvipa, and the Hindu's religious feelings were checked by the strong hand of his Islamic rule.

Advaita Acarya was a great scholar and the most senior among Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's followers. He appeared in Navagrama in Sri Hatta, in the eastern province of Bengal, and resided in Santipura. Ontologically speaking, Sri Advaita Acarya is the avatara of Mahavisnu, who creates the material cosmos through the agency of His illusory energy. Advaita Acarya is the devotee who earnestly invited Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to descend here as the yugavatara to look after the welfare of all souls. He began to worship the Lord with Ganges water and Tulasi leaves and invoked His grace, praying, "O Lord, please come and deliver these people; the time has come to relieve them by the distribution of the sweet name of Krishna. Come, my Lord-they are most poor!" In this way Advaita Acarya attracted Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu by pleading the cause of the fallen souls. Of course, the time had come for the advent of the incarnation for this age, the yugavatara, but still Advaita Acarya performed the function of inviting and welcoming Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

The Advent of Sri Caitanya

And when the Supreme Lord was about to appear, Advaita felt in His heart, "My prayer is going to be satisfied-He is coming!" Ultimately, He detected that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, had personally appeared in the house of Sri Jagannatha Misra and Sacidevi as their newborn boy, Nimai Visvambhara. And so, Advaita Acarya went to pay due respects to the child and His parents on the divine advent day.

When the boy was a little grown up, Sri Advaita Prabhu came down to bow at the feet of the child, Nimai. Sacidevi, Nimai's mother, shuddered: "What are you doing? You are an old pandita, a Vedic scholar. If you show this kind of respect to my young boy it will spoil His future! What are you doing?" It was said that whenever Advaita Acarya used to bow down His head to a Deity, the statue would shatter into pieces if it was a sham, if there was no genuine presence of the Lord. But here, when Advaita put His head at the feet of the boy, Nimai put one foot on Advaita Acarya's head. Everyone was astounded and wondered, "What kind of spiritual power does this child have? Such a great devotee-scholar and senior man as Advaita has bowed down to this child, and the child has stepped on Advaita's head, but the child is quite unaffected! Who is this child?"

Nimai's Childhood

When Nimai was a boy, sometimes He would disguise Himself with a blanket and enter into the banana grove of a neighbor's house. With a push of His head He used to break down the banana trees. The neighbors would come out and think, "A bull must have entered and demolished our garden!" In these pastimes the Lord was teaching His devotees, "I am demolishing all your banana trees that will be used for some other purpose besides My service. In the highest sense, you are My eternal associates, and I can do anything and everything with your possessions to suit My fleeting pleasures." Sometimes He would snatch fruit from the hand of Sridhara Pandita, saying, "Oh, give me this banana. I won't be able to pay you any price." Sridhara Pandit would tell Him, "Why are you doing this? You are a brahmana boy; I can't refuse you. But you should not do these things. I am a poor man. If you snatch away my best things, how can I make a living?" In this way, Nimai performed His pastimes of stealing fruit.

As Nimai Pandita grew up, he used to show Advaita Acarya great respect. But Advaita could not tolerate it. He said, "I know that You are not an ordinary person. You are a supernatural, transcendental personality of the highest order. Still, in the worldly sense, You are younger than Me, so You show Me respect, but I can't tolerate it. It is too much for Me." But what could Advaita do? Nimai used to show His formal respect to Advaita Prabhu every time They met, so Advaita made a plan to stop this, and thought to Himself, "I shall see how clever You are."

He left Navadwipa, went to Santipura, and began to preach against the devotional school. The news came to Nimai that Advaita Acarya, after such a long time as a devotee, was preaching against the devotional school. He was preaching that jnana, knowledge, is higher than devotion. "Devotion makes the Lord far away," He argued, "and knowledge tries to bring Him very near. With knowledge, one thinks, 'I want to experience You, O Lord.' And devotion says 'He is adhoksaja: transcendental. He can't be traced by our senses.' So devotion makes him far away by saying, 'It is only His sweet will that may connect us.' But according to the path of knowledge, the supreme authority is within you, in your heart. The devotional school is clearly secondary."

"Don't kill that Old Man!"

In this way, Advaita Acarya began to preach. And when that reached the ears of Nimai Pandita, He went with Nityananda to punish Advaita. They jumped into the Ganges and swam all the way to Santipura, where they found Advaita Acarya. Nimai confronted him: "What are you doing, Acarya? Why have You invited me to come here? With Ganges water and Tulasi leaves, You prayed for Me to appear, and now You are making fun of Me? You are speaking against devotion, against Me? What is the matter with You?" In this way, Nimai Pandita began to punish Advaita. He began to punish Advaita. He began to slap Him. The old wife of Advaita Acarya began to cry, "What are you doing? Don't kill that old man!"

Nityananda Prabhu was smiling, and Haridasa Thakura, perplexed, was standing at a little distance trying to understand, "What is the matter?" Then Advaita Acarya Prabhu felt great satisfaction. He said, "I have taught You a lesson now-You have come to punish Me. You are defeated-I have gained victory over You!" Advaita Prabhu began to dance. "Today I have defeated You, My Lord! You had to punish Me. Where has that formal respect You were always showing Me gone now?" In this way, Advaita Acarya rejoiced, and offered Mahaprabhu a feast of sak, His favorite delicacy.

The Lord gave so much grace to Advaita Prabhu that although He was an old scholar and acarya, He was punished with slaps. it is not possible to punish or dishonor anyone we respect, but only our intimate friends. Disrespect and dishonor is possible only when there is great intimacy. Pure devotees want punishment. "Punish us!," they pray, but punishment from the high quarter is not very cheap.

Advaita's Mystic Poem

Many years later, just before Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu began to manifest His final pastimes of divine ecstasy, Advaita Acarya Prabhu wrote some mystic lines of poetry which He sent to the Lord through Jagadananda Pandita:

*baulake kahiha-loka haila baula
baulake kahiha-hate na vikaya caula
baulake hahiha-kaye nahika aula
baulake kahiha-ihā kahiyache baula*

Tell our Prabhu, who acts as madmen do, that everyone has lost their sanity, And rice once high in price has no value. In love of God, half-crazed humanity neglects this world and all they once held dear; tell Him a madman brings this to His ear.

When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu read that mystic poem, His mood became serious. Svarupa Damodara was there: "What is written here?" he said. Mahaprabhu replied, "I do not know what is the real meaning, but Advaita Acarya is a great 'worshiper,' and a certain class of 'worshippers' re accustomed to think, 'We shall invite the Deity, and for some time we shall try to keep Him here for worship. Then, when we are finished with our worship, finally we shall bid Him adieu.' Perhaps Advaita thinks, 'Now it is time for the Deity to go.' I don't know what is the real meaning, but perhaps this is His purpose." Svarupa Damodara took the poem, read it, and became very thoughtful: "Oh. Advaita Prabhu is saying that the requirements for Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance have been fulfilled, and now, He is no longer needed to preach the holy name of Krishna as the incarnation for this age. The avatara's duty is finished, and so He may go."

The Last Twelve Years

After this, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu remained within this world for twelve more years, but not as before. His mood was quite changed. From that day on, He felt great separation from Krishna in the mood of Radharani. Divine madness became predominant in Him and His social connection was almost closed. Ramananda Raya and Svarupa Damodara were His attendants at that time. He no longer kept any social connections; the fire within Him was burning, the fire of separation. He was absorbed in Radharani's search for Sri Krishna after Krishna left Vrndavana. In that mood of divine madness, He spent twelve years in a closed room within the house compound of Kasi Misra.

Sometimes at night, unconsciously crossing the boundary wall, He would run to meet Lord Jagannatha. When Svarupa Damodara and His other attendants would suddenly find that no sound of Krishna's name could be heard within His room, they would begin searching: "Mahaprabhu is not there, where is He?" Sometimes they would find Him fallen before the main gate of the Jagannatha temple, His legs and hands drawn within His body like the limbs of a tortoise drawn within its shell. A very sweet fragrance could be detected emanating from Him, and the cows would flock there, smelling His body. While Mahaprabhu was lying in his trance, He was internally experiencing the pastimes of Radha and Govinda with the gopis in Govardhana. At that time, Svarupa Damodara and the others tried their best to revive Him from His trance by chanting the holy name of Krishna.

When Mahaprabhu was roused, He complained, "What have you done? I was enjoying a most happy experience there but by raising a clamor, you have drawn me down here." And what raised a clamor? The chanting of Hare Krishna. And who was chanting the name of Krishna? Svarupa Damodara and others of his caliber. The depth of the experience of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in His divine trance was so great that He took the chanting of Hare Krishna to be noise. So, we may chant the holy name of Krishna, and that may be simply noise. From another angle of vision, however, it may be seen that krsna-nama is of such immense value that it was given preference

over direct participation in krsna-lila. But the direction given to us by our acaryas, the spiritual preceptors of our line, is that we should consider our own chanting to be merely noise.

One day, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was wandering near the seashore. A girl was fervently singing in praise of Lord Jagannatha, and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu ran straight towards that sound. He began running through thickets of dangerous thorns. Then Govinda, His attendant, somehow stopped Him. When He understood everything, he said, "Oh, a girl is singing? Govinda saved my life."

Half-mad in Ecstasy

Sometimes He would suddenly feel that Krishna is playing with the gopis in the Yamuna. In that mood He would jump into the ocean, crying, "Krishna!" He jumped there and became unconscious, as the waves were playing with Him. Finding Him gone, His devotees would wonder, "Where is Mahaprabhu?" and, headed by Svarupa Damodara, would begin their searching. Once, the night was almost over and they still couldn't find him. At last a fisherman came running, half-mad, chanting, "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna!"

"What is the matter?" Svarupa Damodara asked. The fisherman replied, "Every night I catch fish, but tonight I threw out my net and caught something very heavy. When I began pulling it in, I thought it was a big fish, but when I took it on shore I found a big human figure, and when I went to remove the body from my net, somehow I touched Him; now I am half-mad." Then, Svarupa Damodara said, "You must have seen our Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu?" "No, I have seen Him before," the fisherman said, "He has a beautiful figure. It is not Him. It is something else." Svarupa Damodara told him, "Anyhow, try to show us where He is."

They went and saw the long figure of the Lord, His joints dislocated, lying on the sands, senseless. Svarupa Damodara and the others began to chant the holy name of Krishna in his ear, until he came to his senses. At that time Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu began to describe the lila of Krishna that He had seen in His trance. In this way, after Advaita Acarya's poetry was sent to Him, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu lived His last twelve years in the mood of intense separation that Srimati Radharani felt for Krishna.

Mad Nimai Pandita

This intense degree of divine madness was exhibited by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in His last days on this Earth. But even in His life in Navadvipa, when Mahaprabhu was the great boy-scholar Nimai Pandita, everyone thought he had become mad after he had returned from Gaya and had begun showing signs of devotion to Krishna. The normal-thinking men of the day said: "This Nimai Pandita was a good man, a gentleman, but after returning from Gaya, He is totally changed, and is doing so many undesirable things. He wants to preach so many new ideas. What is this? He has become a madman. He doesn't care for any rules and regulations, social customs, or ancient scriptures-only 'Krishna, Krishna, Krishna.' Before, He was normal, but recently He has become abnormal. Of course, He has a powerful intellect. When he was a professor, he did not care for the scholarship of even the greatest of panditas. He easily defeated the champion scholar, Kesava Kasmiri, and many others. but now we have lost Him. Now He is different. He does not care for the brahmanas or the scriptures we follow. He has a new opinion and He is pre-

sending that to the world. His ways are incomprehensible." The neighbors complained to His mother, Sacidevi: "Sacidevi, what is this? Nimai was not like this before; now He doesn't care for us anymore. He even has no charm for His wife. What has He become? You are the daughter of a gentleman, but just see your misfortune! What to do? The fact is this, Saci" your only son, who was so brilliant, has become mad. You must arrange for proper medical treatment." Then, Sacidevi called for the kaviiraja, the doctor.

The doctor made an arrangement for a small, brick-built bathing tank to be filled up with Visnu oil, which is supposed to be a very cooling thing. And Nimai Pandita was asked to bathe in that tank. He did so, and suddenly began laughing and playing in the tank. As He was diving and swimming in the oil, He was laughing madly. At that time, Srivasa Thakura arrived for a visit and asked, "How is Nimai Pandita?" Sacidevi told him, "Just see my misfortune! My Nimai has become completely mad. I called for the doctor and he arranged for this treatment." As she showed Srivasa how Nimai was playing in the tank, he asked, "What is this?" Saci replied, "My neighbors advised me to do this." Srivasa said, "You are a very gentle lady. You do not know how to deal with others. What Nimai has-I want! Your boy has krsna-prema, and I want a drop of that. If only we are allowed to live a few days longer, we shall have the opportunity of seeing many wonderful pastimes of Krishna."

Then, Nimai became sober for the time being and told Srivasa, "If you had also remarked that I was mad, then I would have run to the Ganges and finished my life. At least you have understood what I am; that is my solace, Srivasa. If you would have told the public, "He is mad," then I would have found that there is no man here to accept what I have come to give, so I must enter the river and drown myself without hesitation."

Before Nimai Pandita went to Gaya, He was a big scholar. When He returned from Gaya surcharged with devotion, He began to explain grammar again, as before, but now He would show Krishna in the grammar. He would give interpretations of the roots of Sanskrit grammar which showed the relationship between Sanskrit and Krishna. He explained that sound is only a vibration, and vibration means the potency of Krishna. It is the potency of Krishna that makes everything pure, that makes everything move. If that potency is withdrawn, everything is dead and gone. In this way, Nimai Pandita wanted to explain grammar in terms of Krishna.

Then, His students became very much disturbed. "What is this!" they thought. "We have come to learn Sanskrit from Nimai Pandita, but our academic requirements will not be satisfied now. Still, the coaching we got from Him is never to be had anywhere else, so we can't abandon Him. but how to improve the style of His teaching?" They went to the previous teacher of Nimai Pandita, Gangadasa Pandita. He had been Nimai's tutor in His childhood. Gangadasa said, "You are all fortunate to be students of Nimai Pandita-He is such a nice professor. What is your complaint?" The students said, "We were very much pleased by studying under Nimai Pandita. But now, since He has returned from Gaya, He is explaining everything in quite a new way. He teaches Sanskrit in terms of the holy name of Krishna. he understands a very high philosophy, but that won't serve our purpose of studying grammar. It is certainly valuable, but it will not help our studies. Please ask Him to change His ways. He has regard for you because you are His teacher. Only you can influence Him." "All right," he said, "Ask Him to see me tomorrow."

The students went to Nimai Pandita and told Him, "Your former professor has called for You. He wants to see You." Nimai said, "Yes, I shall go and see him," and later that day, He went to Gangadasa Pandita, and offered His respectful obeisances. Gangadasa said: "How are You my boy? I am happy to hear that You went to Gaya and performed Your religious duties for Your ancestors. This is all very good, but what is the matter? Your students are complaining to me. Is

it true that You do not care to teach them properly? Why don't You care to teach them as You did before? They all appreciate Your teachings, but after returning from Gaya You have adopted a novel style of teaching. Don't continue this. I say, teach them properly. I hear from e the people that You have become a devotee. But were Your forefathers not devotees? Of course, You have become a devotee of an extraordinary type. But don't go astray. What You speak about devotion seems unnecessary-that is not really grammar. Do You think You are giving new light with Your new meanings? Do You think Your former professors were all idiots? What do You have to say?" Nimai was silent. "All right then. Don't go astray. Remain calm and follow Your predecessors and teach the boys well, so that we will not have to hear any complaints against You in the future. Your students won't go to any other school. They are very fond of You, so teach them well." Then, Nimai Pandita took the dust of His teacher's feet and told him, "Yes, I shall try to obey your order. By dint of your footdust, no one can challenge Me in scholarship. Don't worry. I shall teach them well."

"Why Should I Worship Krishna?"

A few days later, Nimai Pandita began to chant the name 'gopi, gopi' while He was in a trance of devotion. Some big scholars that held a high social position went to Him and said, "Nimai Pandita! You were a big pandita and now You are a devotee. That doesn't matter, but why do you chant the name 'gopi gopi.' What benefit will You get from that? You are mad." Nimai said, "Who is this Krishna? Why should I worship Him? He is a dacoit and a woman-hunter!" And Nimai picked up a stick and chased them away.

Later they began to talk among themselves, saying, "Nimai Pandita has become stark mad. We went to speak something good to Him, and He came with a stick to kill us! We are not sons of ordinary men-we have our high position in society and our family dignity. We will show him!" They began to teach Nimai Pandita a good lesson by giving Him a good beating.

At that time, Nimai suddenly cried out: "I took the greatest measures to deliver these wretched souls, but I see now that they are simply creating more sins by abusing Me and conspiring to punish Me. Why have I come? What will be effective in delivering them? I shall have to take the role of a sannyasi. Otherwise, they will think that I am simply one of them, a householder. But if I become a sannyasi, a preacher-then they may have some respect. They will say, "We are all householders, He has become a sannyasi. He should be revered." Then, from that reverence, they will get some benefit. Otherwise, they will have to go to hell for thinking that I am an ordinary man. To create some respect, so they may benefit, I shall have to accept the role of sannyasi. And He revealed to Nityananda Prabhu and a few others, "On the last day of the first month of this year, I shall take sannyasa."

5/A Tragedy of Separation

According to solar calculation, it was on the day of Makara sankranti, an auspicious conjunction of the stars, that Nimai Pandita went to Katwa to take sannyasa, the renounced order of life. After this, He would become known as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He swam across the Ganges and in wet cloth ran towards Katwa. Just before this, He told only a few of His friends, including Nityananda Prabhu, Gadadhara Pandita, Mukunda, and others, "The time when I will accept the robe of renunciation is very near."

Just a few days before this, an opposition party had been raised against Nimai Pandita. Those who believed that material nature is the highest principle, and that consciousness is a product of matter, began to abuse Nimai Pandita. He thought, "I came to deliver the lowest of men, but if they commit offenses against Me, there will be not hope for their upliftment." Suddenly, He said, "I came with that medicine which gives the greatest relief, but now I find that their disease is rapidly growing worse and seems beyond treatment. It will take its own course towards doom. The patients are committing offenses by abusing their doctor. They are making arrangements to insult Me. They take it that I am a family man-their nephew-they take Me as one of them. I came with the best medicine for the present degraded age, but now I find that they are plotting against Me. Now they are doomed. At least I have to show them that I am not one of them." He thought, "I shall leave family life and take sannyasa and wander from village to village, town to town, preaching the holy name of Krishna." That was His decision, and within a few days He went to take sannyasa at Katwa from Kesava Bharati Maharaja.

Just the day before He left to take sannyasa, from the afternoon until the evening, there was a spontaneous gathering of devotees in the home of Nimai Pandita. Every year in Bengal, that day was celebrated as laksmi-puja, worship of the goddess of fortune, when special cakes are prepared and distributed. Nimai, knowing that early the next morning He would leave Navadvipa to take sannyasa, attracted His followers in such a way that almost every leading devotee came to see Him that evening.

The Hare Krishna Maha Mantra

They came with flower garlands and many other offerings to be presented to the Lord. Nimai accepted their garlands and then placed them on the necks of the devotees who gave them. Only four of His most intimate devotees knew He was leaving; the ordinary devotees did not know this would be His last night in Navadvipa. With His own hands He garlanded the necks of His devotees and appealed to them, "Always chant the name of Krishna. Under no condition should you give up this krsna-nama. And don't do anything else. While working, eating, sleeping or walking, day or night-in whatever you do-continuously take the name of Krishna. Always talk about Krishna-nothing else. If you have any real attraction for Me, then don't do anything without chanting the name of Krishna.

"Cultivate Krishna consciousness. Krishna is the origin of us all. He is our father; we have come from Him. The son who shows no gratitude towards the father is sure to be punished birth after birth. Always chant these names of the Lord:

**Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare**

No other religious principle is required. Chant Hare Krishna. This is not an ordinary mantra, but this is the maha-mantra, the greatest of all the great mantras, the very essence of all the mantras known to the world. Only take to this, always. No other prescription is to be followed.

"Remember your Lord, your home. This is a foreign land; you have nothing to aspire after here. Try always to go back home, back to Godhead." In this way, the Lord spoke, and all His devotees intuitively came because it was Nimai Pandita's last night in Navadvipa.

The Lord and the Fruitseller

Late at night, one devotee named Sridhara Kholaveca arrived. He used to make trade on the plantain tree and its fruit. He would sell the fruit, ripe or green, and the big leaves which are used as plates. Sometimes Nimai would pay him less for his fruits than what they were worth, and sometimes He would snatch the best fruits from him. Sridhara came to see Him late at night to offer Him a choice pumpkin. And Nimai thought, "I have spent almost My whole life snatching so many things from him, and now, on this last night he has brought this wonderful pumpkin. I can't resist." He asked Sacidevi, "Mother, Sridhara has given Me this pumpkin. Please think of how it can be prepared." At bedtime, someone came with some milk. Nimai said, "Mother, with this milk and this pumpkin, please prepare some sweet-rice." So Sacidevi prepared some pumpkin sweet-rice: pumpkin boiled with milk, rice, and sugar.

Late at night, at about three o'clock in the morning, Nimai went away. He left Visnupriya-devi asleep in bed. His mother Sacidevi, sensing what was to come, was staying awake all night guarding the door. Nimai bowed down to her and went away. And like a stone figure, Mother Sacidevi sat there by the gate as Nimai left. She could not say anything, but was struck dumb.

A little after three o'clock in the morning, Nimai swam across the Ganges and in His wet cloth went straight to Katwa, a distance of twenty-five miles. He reached there by nine or ten o'clock. There, He approached Kesava Bharati to take sannyasa.

Mother Sachi's Sadness

In the early morning, the devotees came to see Nimai and found Sacidevi like a statue, sitting at the door. The door was open. Everything was empty. "What's the matter Sacidevi?" they asked. She told them, "O, I was waiting for you devotees. You take possession of the house. I shall go somewhere else. I can't enter this house any more. You are His associates; you are the true heirs. Take possession." They begin to throng around her and console her. "You will go? What about the young wife He left? The girl is only fourteen years old. Who will protect her? You can't shun the responsibility given to you. It is on your shoulders." In this way they came and consoled her and tried to give her some hope.

Suddenly the devotees heard that Nimai Pandita, Sri Gauranga, had left Navadvipa. They learned that He had gone to Katwa, to Kesava Bharati's asrama to take sannyasa, bidding goodbye to the people of Navadvipa forever.

A dark shadow came down. Many began to weep and cry for Him. Many of them ran towards Katwa. Nimai Pandita was an unprecedented scholar with beautiful features-tall, fair, and benevolent. He had already made the people mad with the holy name of Krishna. He had released the two great sinners Jagai and Madhai from their nasty life. He had checked the Mohammedan ruler, the Kazi, who had broken the mrdanga drum. As a famous Pandita, He had defeated many

scholars who came to conquer Navadvipa, which was very much renowned for its high culture of learning, especially of logic.

At that time in Navadvipa, logic (nyaya), worship of material energy (tantra), and official Hinduism (smṛti), were in high culture. Navadvipa was highly renowned for scholarship. If panditas could not defeat the scholars of Navadvipa, they could not become famous. From far away in Kashmir, Kesava Kasmiri had to come to Navadvipa to get a certificate that he was a pandita. And he was defeated by Nimai Pandita. Kesava Kasmiri was such a big pandita that it was rumored he was the favorite child of Saraswati, the goddess of learning. No one could face him. Still, he was defeated by Nimai Pandita.

Goodbye Forever

But Nimai Pandita left Navadvipa forever and took sannyasa because the people of Navadvipa could not appreciate Him. He reached Katwa, where, just on the banks of the Ganges, there was a sannyasi: Kesava Bharati. Nimai went to him and asked him for sannyasa. Kesava Bharati suddenly found that his asrama was full of luster. At first, it seemed as if the sun was rising before him; then he saw that it was a bright person approaching. He rose from his seat, and with strained eyes approached in wonder. "What is this?" he thought.

Then he realized that the great devotee-scholar, Nimai Pandita, had come. He appeared before him saying, "I want to take sannyasa from you." But Kesava Bharati could not accept Nimai's offer. "I am charmed by Your beauty and personality," he said. "But You are so young, only twenty-four years old. What about Your mother, Your wife, and Your guardians? Without consulting with them, I cannot venture to give You the robe of renunciation."

In the meantime, as it was Makara-sankranti, a famous holiday, many people had come to take bath in the holy waters of the Ganges. They gathered there and the rumor spread like fire: "Nimai Pandita of Navadvipa has come to take sannyasa." Many men flocked there, until a huge crowd gathered.

Affectionate Opposition

They all opposed Mahāprabhu's sannyasa. Some of them raised their voices in protest: "You-Kesava Bharati! We won't allow you to give sannyasa to this young man. He has a family, His mother and wife. We won't allow it. If you give sannyasa to this charming, young, beautiful boy, we will break down your asrama immediately. It can't be!"

But Nimai Pandita kept pressing for sannyasa. At last, Kesava Bharati asked Him, "So, You are that Nimai Pandita about whom we have heard so much? Many big scholars came to conquer Navadvipa, the famous seat of learning, and You have defeated them all. Are You that Nimai Pandita?" "Yes," said Nimai. Kesava Bharati told Him, "I can give You sannyasa, but You must take the permission of Your mother-otherwise I won't, I can't do it." Nimai suddenly began running towards Navadvipa to ask permission, but Kesava Bharati thought, "He has such a commanding personality, He can do anything."

Nimai was called back. Kesava Bharati told Him, "With Your most extraordinary personality You can do anything. You will go there, charm Your guardians, get permission, and return. Nothing was impossible for You."

The ordinary public was very much enraged, saying to Kesava Bharati, "We can't allow you, Swamiji, to give sannyasa to this young boy. It is impossible! If you do, then we shall smash your asrama." Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu began performing kirtana, chanting Hare Krishna and dancing madly. And the angry mob grew, sometimes creating a disturbance. In this way the whole day passed with no decision. The night passed in sankirtana. And the next day, Nimai's will prevailed, although there was still some opposition.

Tears From The Eyes of Millions

Nityananda Prabhu, Nimai's maternal uncle Candrasekhara, Mukunda Datta and Jagadananda Pandita, gradually arrived there. And that afternoon, the sannyasa function began. Candrasekhara Acarya was asked to perform the ceremony on behalf of Nimai Pandita, who began to chant and dance and charm the audience.

*laksa locanasru-varsa-harsa-kesa-kartanam
koti-kantha-krsna-kirtanadhya-danda-dharanam
nyasi-vesa-sarva-desha-ha-hutasya-kartaram
prema-dhama-devam eva naumi gaura-sundaram*

"While showers of tears fell from the eyes of millions, He delighted in having His beautiful hair shaved away. Millions of voices sang the glories of Krishna, as Sri Krishna Caitanya accepted the staff of renunciation. From that time on, wherever He went, whoever saw Him in the dress of a sannyasi cried in grief. I sing the glories of that beautiful Golden God, the giver of divine love."

Mahaprabhu's Sannyasa

The scene was at Katwa. Four-hundred and seventy-four years ago, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took sannyasa. He was young and beautiful, with a tall figure. He was only twenty-four and had beautiful curling hair. A barber was asked to shave Him, and approached Him, but then withdrew. The barber could not venture to touch Nimai's body. He began to cry. "How can I remove such beautiful hair from such a beautiful head?"

And so many others were also crying aloud, "What a horrible thing is being done here! Who is the creator of this sannyasa? Who is so hard-hearted that he created the sannyasa-asrama, where one must give up all that is near and dear and go from door to door, begging, leaving his own friends and relatives crying helplessly? What is this creation of the Supreme? Is it logical? Is it a happy thing? It is most cruel!"

Nimai Pandita was smiling. After the barber was ordered repeatedly, somehow he was forced to shave Nimai's head. At first, he could not venture to touch His hair, saying, "I can't touch Him." But at last, he had to do the service of shaving the beautiful, curling hair of the beautiful face of the twenty-four year old genius boy. He began with his shears. Some people could not stand the

scene. Some even became mad. In the midst of the weeping, wailing, and crying of the threatening mob, it was done.

Nimai Pandita was senseless. After being only half-shaved, He stood up and began chanting in kirtana and dancing in ecstatic joy. After He was shaved, the barber promised, "I will never again shave anyone with this hand! I would rather live by begging. This is my last service as a barber." After this, that barber took up the occupation of a sweetmaker.

Ultimately Nimai's appeals pacified the mob, and a little before noon the inevitable gradually came: the sannyasa function was performed. Candrasekara Acarya, the maternal uncle of Nimai Pandita, was deputed to take charge of the rituals in the ceremony of sannyasa. When the mantra was to be conferred, Nimai Pandita asked Kesava Bharati, "Is this the mantra you will give me? I heard it in a dream." He whispered the mantra in the ear of his guru who accepted, saying, "Yes, this is the mantra I shall give you." Then that mantra was given.

And the name of this sannyasi was not given in an ordinary way either. A most peculiar name came through Kesava Bharati: "Krishna Caitanya." None of the ten names generally given to sannyasis was given to Nimai Pandita, but the name that was given to Him was Krishna Caitanya. As soon as they heard that name, the mob began to cry, "Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu ki jaya!" "All glories to Sri Krishna Caitanya!"

The father of Srinivasa Acarya was a class-friend of Nimai Pandita. On his way to his father-in-law's house, he heard that Nimai Pandita had come to take sannyasa. He ran there, and seeing everything, he became dumb—he was devastated and went half-mad. After that, nothing came from his mouth but "Caitanya!" After he heard the name "Krishna Caitanya," whatever anyone said to him, he would only say, "Caitanya!" He became mad. After that, his name became Caitanya dasa. His former name vanished, and everyone used to call him Caitanya dasa. He could not stand the scene of Nimai Pandita's sannyasa.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, newly dressed in red robes, embraced His guru, and both of them began to dance, chanting the name of Krishna. After some time, the meaning of the name was given. Kesava Bharati Maharaja said, "Sri Krishna Caitanya means that You arouse Krishna consciousness throughout the entire world. You have descended to make all people Krishna conscious. So the most suitable name for You cannot but be Sri Krishna Caitanya."

The Nectarine World

Mahaprabhu was very cheerful, thinking, "I am going to relieve so many souls from their eternal misery and affliction. I have promised to deliver the whole world from this ocean of misery and take them to the nectarine world, and now I am going to accept that task." He was cheerful, but everyone around Him was diving in the ocean of despair and sorrow.

Some scholars stress that Caitanya Mahaprabhu took sannyasa from Kesava Bharati, who was a mayavadi, an impersonalist. But although Kesava Bharati may have externally showed himself in that way, it is seen that by coming in connection with Mahaprabhu, he became a devotee. Otherwise, we may also think that he was a devotee who came in the garb of an impersonalist to help the preaching of Mahaprabhu by assisting Him with the social formality of taking sannyasa. At that time, all over India, mayavadi sannyasis had greater recognition than Vaishnava sannyasis, and Kesava Bharati was already situated in that post. Mahaprabhu took the garb of a sannyasi.

si from him for His own purpose, to help His preaching activity. All these things may be explained in different ways. In any case, after Mahaprabhu took sannyasa, Kesava Bharati began to sing and dance with Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He joined in sankirtana and was immediately converted.

Krishna Conception: Union in Separation

In this way, the sannyasa of Nimai Pandita took place. What is the meaning of His sannyasa? Is it redundant, auxiliary, or a necessary part of spiritual advancement? Is it desirable? Although apparently undesirable, still it has its necessity. In the Krishna conception of theism, there is a deep-rooted correlation between union with the Lord and separation from Him. Without separation, union cannot be deep-rooted. The pain of separation can enter into the depth of the heart much more than cheerfulness. Such apprehension increases our satisfaction. The greater our want, the greater our satisfaction. This is especially true in love affairs. If there is no necessity of a thing, it has no value. This principle is found everywhere. A glass of water is ordinary, but according to the degree of its necessity, its value will increase. So the degree of necessity is most important. Necessity means separation. Necessity independent of fulfillment is separation, hunger.

Separation plays the most important part in both Navadvipa and Vrndavana lila. How many years of union were there between Krishna and the gopis? Krishna was only in Vrndavana from the age of seven years up to the age of twelve: five years. Then, He went to Mathura. Of course, it is mentioned in the Padma Purana that in peculiar or extraordinary cases, growth should be measured by multiplying by one and a half. So when Krishna is eight years old, He should be considered twelve. When He is twelve, he should be considered eighteen years of age. So according to his growth, Krishna was in Vrndavana from the age of twelve to eighteen, but according to His years, from the age of seven to twelve.

The Depth of Divine Love

He stayed in Dvaraka for a long time; altogether He lived here on this Earth for one hundred and twenty-five years. After He left Vrndavana at the age of twelve, the pangs of separation were felt by the gopis throughout their whole lives. There long, long separation has made their devotion so dignified; the test of separation shows whether love is real. Such a long-standing separation and such a great test has never been found in history; still, the depth of their love did not diminish. Rather, an inconceivable, ever increasing depth of divine love was found there.

And in both Navadvipa and Vrndavana, the background is almost similar. In Navadvipa, to gain victory over the opposition party, Mahaprabhu left His household life. And in vrndavana-lila it is also similar. The opposition in vrndavana-lila came from Mathura in the form of Agha, Baka, Putana, Trnavarta, and other demons who were being sent by King Kamsa. To uproot the opposition, Krsna had to go to Mathura. And when He went there, He found that the opposition was widespread. Kamsa's father-in-law, Jarasandha, Kalayavana, Sisupala, Dantavakra, and many others were inimical to Krishna. So Krishna promised the gopis that after finishing His enemies, He would return to Vrndavana to play peacefully with them. To uproot the opposition party, Krishna had to go away. And He told the gopis in Kuruksetra, "I have some other enemies; after

finishing with them, I will be reunited with you." That sort of hope was given to the gopis in Kuruksetra.

Here also, to conquer the opposition party, Mahaprabhu had to leave Navadvipa. Later, after His conquest of all the Indian scholars and religionists of different positions and creeds, after five years, when He returned to Navadvipa, everyone was transformed. The mass approached Him madly. It is difficult to conceive with what madness the mass approached Sri Caitanyadeva, the child of their own village.

The Ganges-Filled with Human Heads

They crossed the Ganges. The whole Ganges, as far as it could be seen, was filled with human heads. They were running towards Him from all directions in such a way that the jungles were cleared by human feet. For a few days, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu stayed nearby in Vidyānagara, and then went towards Vrndavana, singing the holy name of Krishna. Thousands of devotees were running behind Him, digging up the earth to take the dust of His holy feet, and huge pits were being created.

For about eighteen years Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu led a scholarly life as Nimai Pandita. After that, for about six years, He wandered through the length and breadth of India, including Vrndavana. The last eighteen years of His life, He remained in Jagannatha Puri continuously. For the first six years of His sannyasa, He mixed with the general public. The last twelve years of His life, He almost retired from the whole human society and engaged Himself deeply in tasting the union in separation of Radha-Govinda. And many extraordinary symptoms of ecstasy which have never been experienced anywhere, nor even heard of, were expressed by Him. Separation can produce such wonderful effects in the body and mind.

Sri Gauranga-avatara

Sri Gauranga-avatara has twofold characteristics: the apparent reason for His advent is to deliver to people in general from sin, and to give them the highest attainment of life-to take them towards Vrndavana, braja-lila, by giving the holy name of Krishna. This is actually the function of the yuga-avatara, the incarnation of Godhead for the age. The Lord comes to distribute the divine sound and to show how one can reach the highest position through divine sound. Still, He had another purpose to fulfill. Once in Brahma's day-in a special Kali-yuga-Krishna Himself comes in the mood of Radharani to search Himself. He wants to taste the mood of Radharani, to understand the nature of Her inner hankering for Krishna, how She can taste the sweetness of Krishna by Her mood, and what is the joy She derives.

Krishna wanted to have some experience of why Radharani is so mad for Him. He thought, "What is there in Me that makes Her so immeasurably mad for Me? What sweetness can She draw from Me? I can't ascertain it." He wanted to mold Himself in the mood of Sri Radhika and try to taste His own self from that temperament. So He came as Sri Caitanya.

When He conceived of such an incarnation, and proposed His idea to Srimati Radharani, we are told that Radharani, on Her part, said, "Sometimes You will madly ross on the earth, taking My name, but I wont be able to tolerate it. I shall cover Your body with My golden form. I won't

allow You to roll on the earth. I shall cover You with My embrace." So it is said by those who know the ontological aspect of Sri Caitanyadeva, "I offer my respects to Sri Caitanyadeva, whose mood and color is Radharani's and whose inner self is Krishna searching for Himself, tasting Himself, and trying to understand why Radharani is mad to taste Him and what sort of sweetness She finds in Him (radha bhava dyuti suvalitam naumi krsna svarupam).

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu remained in this world for forty-eight years. In the last twelve years of His life, He engaged Himself with deep attention in tasting Himself. Just as everyone is mad to taste sweetness, Krishna, sweetness personified, is also mad to taste Himself.

Introspection means to know oneself. Consciousness can know consciousness. And just as one can feel his own body, or consciousness can conceive of itself, ecstasy can also taste ecstasy. This is confirmed by Svarupa Damodara Prabhu, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's personal secretary, who is considered to be Lalita-sakhi, the nearest friend of Srimati Radharani in the pastimes of Krishna. He has said what Sri Caitanyadeva is:

*radha krsna-pranaya-vikrtir hladini saktir asmad
ekatmanav api bhuvi pura deva-bhedam gatau tau
caitanyakhyam prakatam adhuna tad dvayam caikyam aptam
radha-bhava-dyuti-suvalitam naumi krsna svarupam*

"I worship Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is Krishna Himself, enriched with the emotions and radiance of Srimati Radharani. As the predominating and predominated moieties, Radha and Krishna are eternally one, with separate individual identities. Now They have again united as Sri Krishna Caitanya. This inconceivable transformation of the Lord's internal pleasure-giving potency has arisen from the loving affairs of Radha and Krishna."

In this verse, Svarupa Damodara says that the pastimes of Radha-Krishna and those of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu are parallel and eternal. Whether winter is first and summer follows, or summer is first and winter follows is difficult to say. Similarly, in the eternal pastimes of the Lord, the movement is rolling in a circle. Therefore, Svarupa Damodara says, "Whether Caitanya-avatara is first and Krishna-avatara is next, or Krishna-avatara is first and Caitanya-avatara is next is difficult to say-both are eternal." And who is Sri Radha? She is the development of the sweetness that springs from Krishna Himself. That sweetness, in a developed form as Radha, springs up from within Krishna; Srimati Radharani is a particular potency coming out of Krishna Himself: hladini sakti. So Radha and Krishna cannot be conceived of as separate entities; the two of Them are one and the same. Still, we are told that in ancient times They divided into two. And then again, both of Them combine as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, whose luster and mood is that of Srimati Radharani and whose nature and reality within is Sri Krishna's. Fire and heat cannot be separated; sun and light cannot exist separately. They are one and the same. The Absolute Truth is one absolute substance (advaya-jnana), but sometimes Radha and Govinda show Themselves as divided and again They are united. When They are together, They are enjoying each other, and sometimes They experience a painful separation without the possibility of union. That is Their divine nature.

Sri Rupa Goswami explains this as follows:

*aher iva gatih premnah
svabhava-kutla bhavet
ato hetor ahetos ca
yunor mana udancati*

He says that just as a serpent naturally moves in a crooked way, in a zigzag way, the nature of love is naturally crooked. It is not straight. So the concerned parties quarrel, sometimes with cause and sometimes without cause, and separation comes. Separation is necessary for the transcendental pastimes of Radha and Krishna

The Pangs of Separation

There are four kinds of separation: purva-raga, mana, prabasa, and prema-vaicittya. Purva-raga means before actually meeting. This is found when Radha and Govinda are not actually meeting, but somehow one has come in remote connection with the other's name, portrait, or something of that nature. When Radha hears Krishna's name or the sound of the flute-no real meeting is there, but there is some connection. The sound of Krishna's flute, a picture of Krishna, or Krishna's name may bring about purva-raga. And Krishna may experience something similar by hearing the sound of Srimati Radharani's name. In this way, there are pangs of separation, but no actual meeting. The name is so sweet that He can't contain Himself; She can't contain Herself.

When the holy name of Krishna enters within Srimati Radharani's ear, She becomes perturbed, thinking, "Is a name as sweet as this possible within this world?" This is Her reaction, and She experiences this also. She feels, "I can't meet Him." A pang of separation comes within Her heart. That is purva-raga: the pain of separation that comes before meeting.

Mana is another kind of separation. Mana means that when meeting, there is some difference between Them in trifling matters. This is the very nature of love. Therefore, Srila Rupa Goswami says that love moves in a curved way like a serpent. It is not diseased, but this is the nature of the path of love. Sometimes with a trifling cause, or with no cause, a feeling comes that, "He is neglecting Me; He wants to avoid Me." And thereby Srimati Radharani thinks, "I don't want His company." Although cent per cent appreciation is there, still, for the time being, some opposing sentiments spring up from underground; a clash comes in the sentiments of the two, and one wants to avoid the company of the other.

Transcendental Jealousy

In prema-vaicittya, jealousy rises to such a degree that although They are already together, still some sort of thought comes within and makes Them think that They are far away from each other. These different kinds of separation are found only in the madhurya-rasa. Prema-vaicittya is that condition which arises when Krishna is there and Radharani is just nearby, but seeing Her own shadow reflected on the body of Krishna, She is so jealous that She thinks that it is another lady. So, great pangs of separation come within Her, and She thinks, "What is this? Another lady is there!" Her mind revolts. But Her friend, Lalita, is warning Her, "What are You saying? It is only Your own image reflected there. Can't You see it?" Then Radharani comes to Her consciousness. She particularly notices, "Oh, it is My own shadow." Then that feeling is immediately gone. This is an example of prema-vaicittya. These are extremely high transcendental subjects, and although this is not to be discussed in details, this is the nature of divine love in union and separation. Both are interdependent, for one cannot stay without the other, and separation is created willingly to enhance union.

Another kind of separation is called *prabasa*. There are two types of *prabasa*: one is when the separation is for a limited time; another is when one has left the country for a far-off place, as when Krishna went to Mathura to attend to other duties. These are the four types of separation pangs between the lover and the beloved.

Of course, these transcendental topics are very high, and we should not indulge in them carelessly, for if we project mundane characteristics into the higher plane, our future realization will be harmed. Our mundane experience will tend to take us down, so we must proceed with caution. What we conceive of at present is not to be found in the plane of Krishna's pastimes—it is a far higher plane of existence than the realm of our experience. Our vision is adulterated. We have only an alloyed conception of the original thing. We must keep this in mind, and with this caution we may deal with these things.

It is safer to deal with the topics of the separation between Radha and Govinda than with their union. Of course, we must understand that the pain of separation experienced by Radha and Govinda has nothing to do with this plane. And so, with this caution, we may talk to some extent about separation, but it will be extremely dangerous for us to discuss or to think of when Radha-Govinda and their intimate friends are combined, enjoying each other's company, because if we deal with the pastimes of Radha and Krishna with any mundane conception, we will create a great offense. So to conceive of the union of Radha and Govinda is more dangerous than cultivating feelings of separation, as Mahaprabhu has shown by His example.

In separation from Krishna, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is thinking, "I can't tolerate even My own life without Krishna! Without His grace, without His company, I can't maintain my undesirable existence." This kind of mood helps us, but still we should not imitate it; rather we must respectfully accept it as our highest ideal. This will help us brush aside our filthy, unwanted habits (*anarthas*). If some tears come, however, we should not think that we have realized the highest stage; that sort of thinking should be avoided. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself says, "I don't have a drop of divine love within Me, for otherwise, how could I maintain My mundane life?"

And Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took *sannyasa* so that the residents of Navadvipa would be drawn into this high stage of separation through affection's force. His old mother Saci-devi was crying hopelessly. His young wife, Visnupriya-devi, was helplessly passing Her days. Mahaprabhu took *sannyasa* to create excitement, piercing into the hearts of the people the divine love that He came to give. They thought, "Who was Nimai Pandita? What great benefit did He come to give us?" That He left everything made them sympathetic towards Him. And for all these reasons the Lord went to take *sannyasa*.

"I Must Run to Vrndavana!"

After the function of *sannyasa* was finished, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu became mad. "I must run to Vrndavana," He thought. "I have given up all connection with this world. I have no attraction for it. I must run to Vrndavana to exclusively engage Myself in the service of Krishna." In trance, He began to chant a verse from the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* where Krishna gives a description of *sannyasa* to Uddhava. This verse was spoken by a *tridandi-bhiksu*, a mendicant. Mahaprabhu quoted this verse, thinking, "I have accepted this garb of a *sannyasi* for this is favorable to My spiritual life. Now, no one in society has any claim over Me, and I will be able to exclusively devote Myself to the service of Krishna. I am going to Vrndavana with no other engagement or connection with anyone." In this way, in ecstatic madness He began to chant and dance. Kesava Bharati Maharaja embraced Him, and both guru and disciple joined together, chanting and

dancing. At that time Mahaprabhu spoke the verse of the brahmana who, in the last stages of his life, took tridandi sannyasa and had to tolerate the torture of society in different forms. He said:

*etam sa asthaya paratma-nistham
adhyasitam purvatamair maharsibhih
aham tarisami duranta-param
tamo mukundanghri-nisevayaiva*

"The previous great sages have accepted and shown the path of sannyasa. I have now accepted that very form of life. Now leaving everything aside, I shall run towards Vrndavana. There, taking the name of Mukunda, Krishna, I shall cross over the ocean of nescience. Crossing over this maya, I shall reach Vrndavana and fully enter the service of Krishna."

The dress of a sannyasi is meant only for an external adjustment, but the real thing is to serve Mukunda. And so, with this verse, He suddenly started towards Vrndavana from Katwa. Near the banks of the Ganges, He entered the jungle thinking, "Now, My duty is to reach Vrndavana as soon as possible and there, in a solitary place, I shall sit and chant and sing the name of Krishna."

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu ran towards Vrndavana and entered the jungle before evening. And Nityananda Prabhu, Candrasekhara Acarya, Mukunda Datta, and Jagadananda pursued Him through the jungle. Sometimes while running He should suddenly fall on the ground and begin to cry, "Krishna, Krishna!" Getting up suddenly, He began running-without any apparent direction-to the north, east, west and south.

Wandering in Trance

Sometimes He would run away so swiftly that the devotees could not trace Him, especially in the night, when they would lose Him in the darkness. Then, they would all be disappointed, thinking, "Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, our lord and master, has left us!" But suddenly they would hear Him far away, crying, "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna!" in a piteous, wailing tone. Then they would run in that direction and see that He was lying on the ground, crying,

*kahan mora prana natha murali-vadana
kahan karon kahan pan vrajendra-nandana*

"Where is my beloved Krishna? I can't tolerate His separation. Where is the Lord of My life, who is playing His flute? What shall I do now? Where should I go to find the son of Maharaja Nanda?" In a piteous, heart-rendering tone, He was crying. In a bewildered state, with no consciousness of any particular direction, He would say, "Who are you? I'm going to Vrndavana. Why are you disturbing Me?" After nursing Him, again they began to start towards the west, towards Vrndavana. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu continued wandering in trance. But the great attraction of His devotees did not allow Him to go towards the west.

Taking advantage of His trance, Nityananda Prabhu somehow coaxingly turned Mahaprabhu's face towards Santipura. It is mentioned in the Caitanya-Bhagavata that beginning from Katwa, they went west until they reached a place near Vakresvara, about six miles north-east of Dubrara-jpura, in the district of Birbhum. In Visramatala, on the other side of the Adjai river, there is a

place which is observed as the seat of Sri Caitanya. There, they say, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu turned His face from the west towards the east, or from Vrndavana to Santipura.

They wandered throughout the remaining evening, and then another day and night. Finally, on the third day, in the evening, He returned through Kalna to Santipura through the arrangements of Nityananda Prabhu, who appeared before Mahaprabhu in the red cloth of a renunciate. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, although so familiar with Him, couldn't recognize Nityananda. He saw a sannyasi before Him and thought, "I am going to Vrndavana, and here is a sannyasi in front of Me." He said, O Sripada sannyasi, where are You going?

"I shall go to Vrndavana with You."

"How far is Vrndavana from here?"

Nityananda showed Him the Ganges, near Kalna, saying, "Just see, there is the Yamuna."

Mahaprabhu said, "Oh, We have come so near the Yamuna!" Then, He took His bath in the Yamuna, singing this verse:

*cid-ananda-bhanoh sada nanda-sunoh
para-prema-patri drava-brahma-gatri
aghanam lavitri jagat-ksema-dhatri
pavitri-kiryan no vapur mitra-putri*

"O daughter of the sun: although you have appeared in the form of water, you are most dear to the son of Nanda, who is the spiritual sun. You dispel the sins of all sinners. Please purify this mortal body." (Kavi Karnapura: Caitanya Candrodaya-nataka 5.13)

Just before Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu arrived there on the banks of the Ganges, Nityananda Prabhu sent Candrasekahara to inform Advaita Acarya to come. When Mahaprabhu asked Advaita acarya, Is that You, Advaita? How did you know I was in Vrndavana?" Advaita Acarya said, "This must be some kind of joke. Wherever You are is Vrndavana. And it is My fortune that You have come here, near the Ganges."

"Oh, it is the Ganges?"

"Yes." Then Mahaprabhu, regaining His consciousness of this world, said, "Oh, then it is a conspiracy of Nityananda Prabhu. He has brought Me here to the banks of the Ganges and told Me it is the Yamuna. It is all a hoax! I have fallen prey to His hoax."

Advaita Acarya Argued, "No, no, Nityananda Prabhu has not spoken any falsehood. You have really taken bath in the Yamuna. The confluence of the Yamuna and the Ganges is in Allahabad, and it is mentioned in sastra that the western side is the Yamuna, the eastern side is the Ganges. Now you have taken Your bath in the western side, so You have taken Your bath in the Yamuna, according to scripture. So Nityananda Prabhu has not told any lie. Anyway, I have come with this new dress for You. Leave Your wet clothes and accept this new garb. I have also cooked something for You. For three days You have been fasting, and today, as a sannyasi, You must take some charity in My house. I am a poor man," he said with folded palms, "but You must come." They took Him by boat to Santipura, to the house of Advaita Acarya. The next morning Sacidevi came, and Mahaprabhu spent about ten or twelve days there in Santipura performing kirtana.

What is Vrndavana?

What is Vrndavana proper? It is a stage of consciousness. In different stages of consciousness, there are different subjective realities. Everything springs from the willpower of the Lord. He is the subject, and His potency and sweet will is all subjective. The Lord said, "Let there be light," -and there was light. He said, "Let there be water," -and there was water. He said, "Let there be earth," -and there was earth. If, like a hypnotist, the higher subject wants to make the lower subject see something, he cannot but see that thing. We are all in the subjective, imaginary world, but above imagination is the supersubjective plane of reality. So, Krishna reveals Himself to one who has developed pure consciousness, and in the stage of pure consciousness one can perceive the true nature of subjective reality (sattvam visuddham vasudeva sabditam).

To show us that Vrndavana is everywhere, Mahaprabhu was running here and there in ecstasy. When They met, Advaita Prabhu told Him, "You must be jesting when You say You are going to Vrndavana. Wherever You are-that is Vrndavana. We have that experience. What You say is very peculiar: 'I am going to Vrndavana.' Simply to teach us the value of Vrndavana, You are posing in this way."

The Land of Love

Vrndavana, the highest plane of divinity, is a stage of consciousness. Above the plane of awe and reverence found in Vaikuntha, is Vrndavana, the land of simplicity and divine love. The peculiarity of the inhabitants of that highest plane of consciousness is that they do not feel they are in Vrndavana. It is aprakṛta, supramundane.

Knowledge has been classified under five headings. The lowest is knowledge acquired through one's own sense experience: pratyakṣa-what we have experienced through our senses. That is the first stage. The next higher stage is knowledge we have not experience with our own senses, but have gathered from the experience of others (parokṣa), just as the scientists have their experience, and we have gathered some knowledge from their inventions and discoveries.

The third stage is above the stage of human experience (aparokṣa). It is something like deep sleep. When we awaken, we say, "I slept very happily; I slept a very good, sound sleep." But when in deep, dreamless sleep, we have no consciousness of that state. When we return from a deep dreamless sleep, we express some awareness of that experience, but it is hazy. Aparokṣa is a sort of hazy experience which is indistinct, where the subject and material object come together, and the material object vanishes in the subject. Sankaracarya, the great proponent of impersonalism, explains the gradation of consciousness up to this point.

The Fourth Dimension

On the other hand, the great devotee-scholar Ramanujacarya, as well as other Vaisnava acaryas, are of the opinion that there is a fourth stage beyond this. That plane is called adhokṣaja, transcendental, or that which exists beyond the scope of the senses, whether gross or subtle. It is a plane that we can experience only when, by its sweet will, it comes down to our gross plane of understanding. If it withdraws, we are helpless; we can't find it. We cannot say that the Absolute

Truth is under the control of our knowledge. We can't measure it like that. It is independent. By its sweet will it may come down and we may experience that higher realm, but if it withdraws, we are quite helpless; we can do nothing. We may cry or we may pray, but we can't enter there forcibly by dint of our own power. This is the fourth plane of consciousness, and it is grand, all-powerful, and all-inspiring. Only if it reveals itself to us can we have some experience of that plane known as Vaikuntha, the unlimited spiritual region of awe and power

That is the adhoksaja plane. So, there is pratyaksa direct experience through sense perception, then paroksa, learning through the experience of others, then aparoksa, the negative plane of indistinct consciousness, and then the fourth dimension: adhoksaja. We are underground. Real knowledge is above, on the surface, beyond our experience. If we can pierce through the thick coverings walling up our experience, we can come in connection with another plane of consciousness: that is adhoksaja. Adhoksajam indriyam jnanam: adhoksaja means the superior knowledge which can force down our knowledge of the experience of this world. That transcendental, supramental knowledge is the fourth stage of knowledge. That plane is different in every way. It is not similar to this world.

But through Srimad-Bhagavatam and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, we come to know that there is a fifth stage of knowledge which is very similar to this mundane world, yet is not mundane. It is called aprakṛta. That is Goloka, the full-fledged theistic conception which is only found in Krishna's domain. Central knowledge of the absolute must have a connection with even the lowest level of mundane creation; it must be able to harmonize the worst portion of the illusory world. This is known as aprakṛta, supramundane. To enter that highest realm is possible only through divine love.

Everything can be compensated only through love. There is a saying that a loving mother thinks that her blind child has beautiful lotus eyes. She is blinded by affection. So, what is mean and low can only be compensated by love-that shines very beautifully. That is prema, or divine love. Through mercy, through pity, through grace, a kind can come to play with a boy on the street. Affection can make it possible. The difference between high and low disappears at such a stage.

The Spiritual Enchanting Potency

The residents of Vrndavana think themselves ordinary. This is jnana-sunya-bhakti, divine love which is free from any calculation and does not consider even the opulence and power of the Lord. That devotion is above even Vaikuntha and goes on under the spell of yogamaya, the spiritually enchanting potency. It is the special art of yogamaya that those holding the highest position think themselves very insignificant. Love removes the difference of great and small, high and low. Vrndavana is such a plane of existence. There we find devotion free from any trace of calculation (jnana-sunya-bhakti). Even the residents of Vrndavana may not know their own exalted position.

Advaita Prabhu tells Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, "Wherever You are, there is Vrndavana." Narottama dasa Thakura says wherever we find a true devotee of Krishna-there is Vrndavana (yata vaisnavagana sei sthana vrndavana. Prema-Bhakti-Candrika). Outwardly we may think that they are members of this ordinary world, but the object of all their conversation and behavior is Vrndavana. Still, although they are in Vrndavana, they do not feel themselves to be there.

They are not conscious of their own exalted position. A king, when he is not very conscious of his power, thinks himself as an ordinary person. It is something like that. Someone may be a great doctor but through affection he may do the work of a nurse for his patient. Out of his love and affection for the patient, he may come down to do such work, but still he is great. This is the beautiful nature of Vrndavana life. It is great without the attitude, the air of bigness. Although they are really great, they appear to be simple. Power dressed in affection and love, couched in humility—that is Vrndavana. And that is also Navadvipa.

Srimad-Bhagavatam and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu say that this is the highest and most laudable place for us to live. There, the Supreme Lord Krishna and the gopis are living in the forest. There, we find no grandeur or big buildings, but if we have a true eye for grandeur, we will see it in Vrndavana. From an impartial judgement of the facts, their position is very great, but through humility they have apparently descended to our level. It is a very sweet and beautiful form of life that we find in Vrndavana. And Mahaprabhu came to show that to us through Srimad-Bhagavatam. Krishna is the Lord of that land, and the cows, hills, forests, and the Yamuna river are all creating a favorable environment there.

So Mahaprabhu took sannyasa to teach us, to take us up and make us the permanent inhabitants of that place. He says that actually, our real self lives in that plane, but unfortunately our consciousness has become focused outside. Now we are captured by the mundane aspect of this creation and think that we are suffering, but this is all illusion. We must get relief from this mania. Mania means madness, and now we are possessed by some mania. Just as a madman leaves his home and wanders in the street collecting pieces of paper and cloth, we are focused in this world, but when this madness is gone, we will awaken in our own home.

A Great Tragedy

We must return back to Godhead, back to home. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, "Your home is a beautiful land. You must try for that. Why are you always troubled with the horrors of war, epidemic, earthquake, undesirable disease, stealing, dacoiting, and fighting with so many neighbors? At the bottom of all this is the fact that you have identified yourself with this material world and this body of flesh and blood. You have to retrace your path and go back to your home." That is what is necessary. Our homeland is such a lovely and beautiful and divine place. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's sannyasa is all for us, and it is for the purpose of taking us back home, where we can have home comforts, home sweetness. If we have any home-consciousness within, then we must appreciate such a proposal: home sweet home.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's sannyasa is apparently very cruel to His devotees, and to His family members, but it was meant only to take us to our home. To work out the ecstasy of union, it was necessary for Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to show separation from His devotees and relatives. Separation and union are mutually helpful. Mahaprabhu's sannyasa, His renunciation, is a great tragedy of separation.

Epilogue

When Mahaprabhu returned to Navadvipa after five years of His sannyasa, all the men, women, and children madly came to see Him, to have a glimpse of His face. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, the nineteenth-century founder of the Krishna consciousness movement, in his internal conception of the pastimes of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, draws a parallel with the pastimes of Krishna in Kuruksetra. There Dvaraka-Krishna and the gopis of Vrndavana were meeting, and the gopis and gopas wanted to take Krishna from Dvaraka back to Vrndavana. Bhaktivinoda Thakura expresses a similar aspiration. When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu returned to Navadvipa and the crowds rushed to see Him, He stood on the roof of Vacaspati Pandita's house in the red dress of a sannyasi. Taking himself as a permanent resident of Navadvipa, and as one of the members of Srivasa Angam, Bhaktivinoda Thakura envisions himself seeing Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu on the rooftop. When Krishna had gone to Dvaraka and wouldn't return to Vrndavana, the hearts of all the devotees were burdened with grief. In a similar way, Bhaktivinoda Thakura fervently prays: "When will the day come when Nimai Pandita will give up the robes of renunciation and again come and join us in kirtana in the house of Srivasa? Now He can't come-as a sannyasi He can't return to His old house. So now, we are deserted by Him, but our aspiration this: just as the gopis wanted Krishna's royal dress removed, and His cowherd dress resumed, so they could take Him again to Vrndavana and play with Him and rejoice, we aspire that Mahaprabhu's sannyasa dress be removed, and His former dress resumed. In this way, we will get back our Nimai Pandita, who is one of us, in Srivasa Angam. And together we shall rejoice, taking the name of Krishna. Oh, when will that day be mine?"

Part 2 Siksastakam

The Precepts of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

*sri-svarupa-raya-sanga-gambhirantya-lilanam
dvadasabda-banhi-garba-vipralambha-silanam
radhikahirudha-bhava-kanti-krsna-kunjaram
prema-dhama-devam-eva-naumi-gaura-sundaram*

"Diving deep into the reality of His own beauty and sweetness, Krsna stole the mood of Radharani and, garbing Himself in Her brilliant luster, appeared as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. For the last twelve years of His manifest pastimes, He was deeply absorbed in the mood of union and separation and shared His heart's inner feelings with His most confidential devotees. In the agony of separation from Krsna, volcanic eruptions of ecstasy flowed from His heart, and His teachings, known as Siksastakam, appeared from His lips like streams of golden lava.

Prema Dhama Stotram (verse 54)

6/The Holy Name of Krishna

*ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam
sreyah-kairava-candrika-vitaranam vidya-vadhu-jivanam
anandambudhi-vardhanam prati-padam purnamrtasvadanam*

"The holy name of Krishna cleanses the mirror of the heart and extinguishes the fire of misery in the forest of birth and death. As the evening lotus blooms in the moon's cooling rays, the heart begins to blossom in the nectar of the name. And at last the soul awakens to its real inner treasure—a life of love with Krishna. Again and again tasting nectar, the soul dives and surfaces in the ever-increasing ocean of ecstatic joy. All phases of the self of which we may conceive are fully satisfied and purified, and at last conquered by the all-auspicious influence of the holy name of Krishna."

Illumination

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is the pioneer of Sri Krishna sankirtana. He said, "I have come to inaugurate the changing of the holy name of Krishna, and that name will reach every nook and corner of the universe (prthivita ache yata nagaradi-grama sarvatra pracara haibe mora nama)." "What is the meaning of sankirtana? Samyak means "full" and kirtana means "chanting." Together, these two words form the word sankirtana which generally means "congregational chanting of the holy name of Krishna." But samyak means full not only in quantity but also in quality. Full quantity means extensive in number: congregational. Full quality means complete praise. Complete praise can only mean the glorification of Krishna, and not any other gods.

So sankirtana means complete kirtana, a song in praise of the complete whole, the Absolute Truth; anything else is only a partial representation and therefore defective to a certain extent. Therefore, Krishna should be praised. His glories should be chanted, for He is everything. He is the master, the dispenser of both good and bad, the Absolute Controller of everything. Everything is due to Him. The fulfillment of all life is reached in Him alone. Just as a horse may have reins to check his movements, but if let loose will run freely, praise which is unchecked by any mundane purpose will run straight towards the Supreme Cause, Krishna.

The word sri means Laksmidevi: Krishna's potency. This means that in sankirtana, Krishna is worshiped along with His potency, for Krishna's potency is included within Him.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu says that sri krsna sankirtana should thrive throughout the world; it should be victorious without any hindrance (param vijayate sri-krsna sankirtanam). It should be a spontaneous, unchecked, and natural flow. It should be exclusive, independent, and without reservation. And this praise of Krishna should be congregationally chanted—that vibration is beneficial for the whole world. Only by surrender and pure devotion can we take to sri krsna sankirtana.

Cleansing the Mirror of the Mind

What are the different stages through which we will pass while chanting the holy name of Krishna? The first stage is that it cleanses the mirror of the mind. If the mirror of the mental system is covered with dust, we cannot see things clearly, and scriptural advice cannot be properly reflected there. What are the different kinds of dust covering the mirror of the mind? Our infinite, fleeting, and organized desires are considered dust, and our hearts and minds are covered with layers and layers of this dust. Therefore we cannot see things properly; they cannot properly re-

flect in our mind because it is covered with the infinite ordinary desires of this mundane world (bhukti-mukti-siddhi-kami-sakali 'asanta').

So the first effect of sri krsna sankirtana is the cleansing of the mind. The Vedic social system (varnasrama-dharma) has been formed for this purpose. If we discharge our social duties perfectly, without any attraction for the consequences, we achieve purification of our consciousness-but the first installment of nama-sankirtana gives us the end result of varnasrama-dharma: purification of the heart and mind. Then we can understand Vedic advice properly.

The next effect of chanting the holy name is that it extinguishes the fire of material existence in the forest of repeated birth and death. We are forced to come into creation and again die. The mundane wave catches the souls which mingles with that vibration in different stages. That is stopped by the second effect of sri krsna sankirtana, and we become liberated.

With the first stride, the intelligence is purified. With the second stride, the holy name effects liberation from the great conflagration of threefold miseries. The threefold miseries are adhyatmika: miseries within the body and mind, such as disease and mental anxiety; adhibautika: miseries from our neighbors: man, beasts, insects, and so many other living beings; and adhidaivika: natural catastrophes like famine, flood, and earthquake. We have to suffer from these three kinds of miseries which burn in our heartlike fire. But everything is extinguished forever by the second stride of nama-sankirtana which gives us relief.

The Supreme Goal of Life

The next stage is sreyah kairava candrikavitaranam: the holy name bestows upon us the supreme goal of life. After doing away with these two negative engagements, our positive engagement begins and ultimately takes us to reality, to the real truth, which is eternal, auspicious, and beautiful. It takes to that auspiciousness which is above this world of difficulty, and in a general way we achieve the supreme goal, the highest auspiciousness, the greatest good from chanting the holy name of Krishna. If we analyze this scrutinizingly, we find that in this stage, the holy name takes us to an intimate personal relationship with Krishna which includes neutrality, servitude, friendship, and filial affection (santa, dasya, sakhya, and vatsalya rasa). Sreya covers the grace of Nityananda Prabhu, for it is by His grace that we may be allowed to worship Radha and Krishna in Vrndavana (nitaiyer karuna habe braje radha krsna pabe).

The next stage is anandambudhi-varadhanam. When we come to the proper level while chanting the name of Krishna, we find the transcendental ocean that is above all sorts of experience. The name comes to assert Himself over us according to the degree of our surrender, and when our surrender is complete, we feel a new type of ecstatic joy; we experience an infinite ocean of joy which is not static, but always dynamic. There we find new life and a new type of blissfulness. It never becomes stale or static, but at every moment gives us a taste of the infinite ocean of ecstasy.

Complete Self-Purification

The last effect is that our entire existence is purified. This kind of enjoyment does not pollute-it purifies. Enjoyment means exploitation. Mundane enjoyment creates a reaction and pollution

attacks the enjoyer, but here, because Krishna is the aggressor, the result is purification. All enjoyment that comes from the center, from the autocratic desire of Krishna, purifies us completely.

In this verse, the words sarvatma-snapanam mean that all different phases of the self which may be conceived are fully satisfied and purified at once by chanting the holy name of Krishna. And there is another meaning of sarvatma-snapanam. If we praise Krishna congregationally, we will be purified according to our capacity. Both the singer and the audience as well as anyone who comes in connection with the transcendental sound will be purified. Snapanam means "purifying." That vibration purifies everyone and everything that comes in touch with it.

So Mahaprabhu says, "Go on with sankirtana, the congregational chanting of the holy name of Krishna." Of course, sankirtana must be genuine, so association with saints is necessary. It is not an empirical attempt. We are attempting to have a connection with the higher, unconditioned real which can descend to help us here. We must have that connection with higher reality, for that is all-important. The holy name of Krishna is not mere physical sound; it is not lip-deep only, but it has a greater and higher aspect (nama aksara bahiraya bate tabu name kabhu naya). It is all spiritual. We are in the marginal plane of existence, so some higher connection is necessary in order that the wave will descend from that higher realm and come to us and spread its influence outside as well.

Wherever it goes, the sankirtana of the holy name of Krishna will produce these sevenfold results. This is the purport of Mahaprabhu's first verse. The first effect is that the holy name cleanses the soul which is attacked by the dirt of desires from the mundane world. By the second effect it gives mukti, liberation, perfect independence from material forces. The third effect brings real fortune: the opening of the soul's treasure. The innate resources of the soul are gradually awakened by the holy name of Krishna. Here, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu includes the other forms of relationship with the Personal Absolute. In describing the next step, He takes the mood of conjugal devotion, where one is absolutely disposed for Krishna's enjoyment, unconditionally surrendering everything for His maximum pleasure.

"I Need Millions of Mouths!"

The next effect is the tasting of His ecstatic association. In Vrndavana, the realm of Krishna, one who can chant the name of Krishna properly will express himself with a peculiar sort of ego:

*tunde tandavini ratim vitanute tundavali-labdhaye
karna-kroda-kadambini ghatayate karnarbudebhyah sprham
ceta-prangana-sangini vijayate sarvendriyanam krtim
no jane janita kiyadbhir amrtaih krsneti varna-dvayi*

"When the holy name of Krishna appears on the lips of a devotee, it begins madly dancing. Then the name takes over and handles him as if the person to whom the lips belong loses all control over his lips, and the devotee says, 'With one mouth, how much can I gather the ecstasy of the holy name? I need millions of mouths to taste its unlimited sweetness. I'll never feel any satisfaction by chanting with only one mouth.'"

When the sound "Krishna" enters the ear, he feels that transcendental sound awaken in his heart. "What are two ears?" he thinks. "This is the greatest injustice of the creator-I need millions of ears! Then, if I could hear the sweet name of Krishna, my heart might be a little satisfied. I want

millions and millions of ears to hear the sweet name of Krishna." This is the temperament of a devotee when his attention is drawn towards the holy name. Then he faints; he loses himself, merging in an ocean of ecstasy and joy. And in great disappointment he says, "I failed to understand the quality and quantity of the substance of Krishna's name. I am perplexed. What sort of honey sweetness does this name contain?" In this way, the chanter of the name wonders.

Krishna's Mystic Flute-song

This has been taught to us by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who said, "Properly chant the holy name, the sound representation of absolute sweetness." That sweetness is also to be found in the flute-song of the Lord. The sound of Krishna's flute has the great mystic power of capturing and pleasing everyone and everything. Upon hearing the sound of Krishna's flute, the Yamuna's current is paralyzed. The sweet sound of Krishna's flute attracts the trees, the birds, and the beasts. Everything is astounded by contacting the sweet vibration from Krishna's flute.

Sound vibration can work miracles; sound has the highest capturing potency. Sound can make or mar. It can do anything; it has such intrinsic capacity. It comes from the subtlest plane, beyond the ether. That universal sound is absolute sweetness and goodness. How much power is there-how it can capture us! Like a blade of grass, we may be played by the current of that sweet sound in such a way that we cannot even trace out our own personality. We may lose ourselves there, but we do not die; the soul is eternal. Diving, up and down, we are played by the current of the sweet sound. We are less qualified than a straw, a blade of grass, and the Krishna sound is so big and so sweet that it can play us in any way it likes. We cannot begin to conceive how much power is in the name, the sound which is identical with absolute goodness and sweetness.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, "Don't neglect the sound which is one and the same with Krishna." Absolute sweetness and goodness-everything is there within the holy name. And the holy name is representing itself to us in a very cheap way: nothing is required to purchase it-not money, no physical energy. All these things are unnecessary. What is required? Sincerity.

One who simply takes this divine sound sincerely will be so enriched that no one will be able to conceive of so much goodness and development. And anyone may have it very cheaply, but one must chant sincerely with his whole heart. Of course, wholehearted sincerity presupposes going to a proper agent, a saint, and getting the holy name from him.

Sri krsna sankirtana is praised by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the inaugurator of the sankirtana movement who came as Radha-Govinda combined. His advice is most valuable and necessary to tell us that with a sincere spirit we must come to join this sri-krsna sankirtana, the most purifying transcendental sound, which effects liberation, gives all fulfillment, and grants us such a positive attainment that we lose ourselves in the ocean of joy and inconceivable sweetness.

This is Srīman Mahaprabhu's grace, and He proclaims, "Let sri krsna sankirtana be expanded into this mortal world, that it may benefit everyone infinitely, for this is the highest and greatest benefit for the whole world. It is all-comprehensive. It releases us from all sorts of troubles, establishing us in the highest position of attainment."

And in this present degraded age of Kali, only nama-sankirtana can help us. Of course, nama-sankirtana is beneficial in all ages, but it is especially recommended in Kali-yuga, because in this age all other attempts will be opposed by many forces. Nama-sankirtana cannot be opposed by

the troubles and waves of this material world, so one must adopt it. If we exclusively give ourselves to this, we will gain the highest fulfillment of life. There is no necessity of any other campaign, for they are all defective and partial. But the most universal, captivating, and beneficial thing is nama-sankirtana, which takes us to the highest goal. That alone can satisfy everyone.

All souls that are now disconnected from Krishna may be helped in this way. No other movement is necessary. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu tells us, "Exclusively devote yourself to this. It is all-embracing and all-fulfilling. And you can achieve it with the least trouble and least energy. Let it flourish in this Kali-yuga-let it flourish for the welfare of the whole universe, to reestablish all souls in their normal position."

In the last verse of Srimad-Bhagavatam the conclusion of the book is given as follows:

*nama sankirtanam yasya
sarva papa pranasanam
pranamo duhkasamanas
namami harim param*

Papa means all anomalies, all undesirable things: sin. Material enjoyment and liberation are also included as anomalies, sinful activities. Why is liberation considered sinful? Because it is an abnormal condition; our natural function is to serve Krishna, but we do not do that in salvation. Mere salvation does not include service to Krishna, so that is an abnormal position and therefore it is also a sin. To ignore our natural duty and stand aloof cannot but be sinful.

The Spiritual Gift of Vyasa

The concluding verse of the Srimad Bhagavatam says, "Krishna's holy name can relieve us from all undesirable sinfulness, all filthy characteristics, and all miseries. Let us all bow down to Him." Uttering this verse, the Srimad-Bhagavatam stops; that great treatise becomes silent. The last word in the Bhagavatam is nama-sankirtana. The Bhagavatam has given such great importance to chanting the holy name of Krishna, and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu developed it from there. The last publication of the compiler of Vedic literatures, Srila Vyasadeva, took theism to that stage, and gave it to the public announcing, "Chant the name of Krishna! Do this; nothing more is necessary. Take this!" This is the very conclusion of Srimad-Bhagavatam, the greatest spiritual gift of Vyasadeva: "Chant the holy name of Krishna and begin your life in this dark age with the most broad and wide theistic conception."

Nectar of the Nectarine

We may consider ourselves fortunate that we have come to the verge of this most generous and useful thought, that we have come close enough to touch it, to accept it, and float ourselves in its waves according to our capacity. After passing through so many conceptions and the charm of different prospects, we have left them all behind and have come to the shore of the ocean of nama-sankirtana. Now we may throw our bodies in this ocean and begin to swim in the waves of nama-sankirtana, the nectar of the nectarine, by the grace of our guru and the mercy of the Vaisnavas.

It is their property, and we are their slaves. We have such audacity to throw our body into this ocean of nama-sankirtana and swim in that nectarine ocean! Swimming in Radha-kunda, the highest conception of spiritual attainment, can also be found in the highest form of nama-sankirtana. This verse represents the positive side of the unlimited ocean of sri krsna sankirtana. The next verse explains the negative possibilities.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura has given his Sanskrit commentary on the Siksastakam, as well as his Bengali translation, and his is a most original presentation. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Prabhupada has also given his commentary on the Siksastakam. They should be carefully studied in order to understand these points more completely. In these talks, however, I am simply coming out with whatever I feel in my heart. Whatever comes to my mind on these verses, I am expressing, and that is the outcome of what I have collected from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura, Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Rupa Goswami, Sanatana Goswami, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and all the predecessor acaryas. By their grace that is gathered in my storehouse, and I am trying to give the gist of these things.

The Krishna Conception Conquers All

By accepting the path of devotion, a wholesale transformation of our internal system begins, and gradually our charm for the outside world vanishes. There is a war within, and when the Krishna conception enters into the heart of a devotee, all other thoughts and ideas gradually have to retire. This is explained in Srimad-Bhagavatam (2.8.5):

*pravistah karna-randhrena
svanam bhava-saroruham
dhunoti samalam krsnah
salilasya yatha sarat*

When the autumn season appears, the mud within the water vanishes. In the same way, when the Krishna conception enters into one's heart, all other conceptions and aspirations will gradually have to retire, leaving Krishna in possession of everything. When a real drop of Krishna consciousness enters the heart, all opposing forces must leave and Krishna will conquer and take possession of the whole.

That is the nature of Krishna consciousness: nothing can stand in competition with it, not even the so-called devotion for the demigods or faith in creeds like Christianity, Islam, and others. All other conceptions of theism have to retire, leaving the field to the Krishna conception. No aggressors can stand in the fight with Krishna consciousness, the absolute, sweet beauty.

Beauty, sweetness, and charm can capture and defeat power. We are really aspiring after beauty and sweetness, mercy, affection, divine love (prema). Self-dissipation to compensate others with one's own energy and generosity ultimately conquers everyone. It is more rewarding to give than to take. Divine love means die to live: not to live for yourself, but to live for others. The most generous form of life-self-forgetfulness to the extreme is found in Krishna consciousness.

Krishna consciousness is so beautiful that one who develops it loses his own identification and existence also. He becomes totally self-forgetful. Such a charm is there. Who will stand to fight against Krishna? Everyone who comes to fight against Him is disarmed. If in any way Krishna

enters the heart, there can be no other consequence but that He takes possession of everything. Such a benevolent, generous, and sweet person is Krishna: reality the beautiful.

7/Unlimited Names of God

*namanyakari bahudha nija-sarvasaktis
tatrarpita niyamita smarane na kalah
etadrsi tava krpa bhagavan mamapi
durdaivam idrsam ihajani nanuragah*

"O my Lord, Your holy name bestows auspiciousness upon all. And You have unlimited names such as Krishna and Govinda by which You reveal Yourself. In Your many holy names You have kindly invested all Your transcendental potency. And in chanting these names, there are no strict rules concerning time or place. Out of Your causeless mercy, You have descended in the form of divine sound, but my great misfortune is that I have no love for Your holy name."

Illumination

Here it is said, "O my lord, You have revealed the chanting of Your holy names, and all Your power has been invested within those names." Both the holy name of Krishna and its potency are eternal. All potencies or energies are found within the holy name of Krishna. And there is no particular time or place which has been fixed for chanting the name. It is not that one can only chant in the morning, or only after taking bath, or only after going to a holy place-there are no such conditions. One may go on chanting the holy name of Krishna anytime, anywhere, in any circumstance

In this verse, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, "O Krishna, You have given a most sublime opportunity to all. You are so infinitely gracious that You have given us the service of Your holy name (nama bhajana). Still, my misfortune is the worst. I don't find any earnest desire within me to take the name. I have no faith, no love, no tendency to take the name. I do not find any innate hankering to chant the name. What can I do?"

This is the second of Sriman Mahaprabhu's eight precepts. He says, "O Lord, You have given everything from Your side to lift me up from this mundane world of relativity. Your attempt to deliver me is so magnanimous that all You require from me is a little cooperation in accepting Your grace, but I turn a deaf ear to Your magnanimous call. O Lord, I am hopeless."

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has given us great hope in the first verse of His Siksastakam or eight precepts. He explains that the chanting of the holy name of Krishna, when properly undertaken, may progress step by step, revealing seven consequences. The first effect is the cleansing of consciousness; the second is liberation from all mundane relativity. As the third effect, positive goodness awakens within our heart and takes us to Vrndavana. Then, under the guidance of svarupa-sakti, the Lord's internal energy yogamaya, we come to the vadhu conception: we are potency, we are to serve Krishna unconditionally. Vadhu means that rasa which gives full connection with the Lord (madhurya-rasa).

Ecstatic Ocean of Joy

After attaining that stage, what are the other consequences that come? One becomes a particle in the ocean of joy, and that joy is not stale or static, but ever-new and dynamic; it is purifying to the utmost. Although we are allowed to keep our individual conception, still we feel that all parts of our existence become purified to the utmost when we take the name. And this will not only affect me, but all who are connected with this nama-sankirtana. They will experience mass conversion, mass purification, the utmost purification. These are the sevenfold results of chanting the holy name.

After mentioning this thesis in His first verse, Mahaprabhu now gives the antithesis in the second verse. When such great hope is there in the holy name, why are we having so much trouble? Where is the difficulty? Why do we not realize the advantage of the magnanimous sanction of divinity found in the holy name? Inestimable grace is coming from Krishna's side. He has given us so many opportunities, with the least requirement from our side. We must have some taste, some earnestness to accept the holy name; but there's the difficulty—we have none. So what hope can we have? How can we attain it? We may be approaching the holy name formally, but not from the core of our hearts, so by what process can we really benefit and make progress? The third verse answers this question.

Although one may feel that he does not have the minimum required deposit to receive the grant, still it is not a hopeless case. The very nature of this realization takes him to the conception of humility. When one begins to practice devotion towards the infinite Lord, he cannot but feel that in relation to the infinite, there is nothing of value in himself. He thinks, "I have nothing to give in return; even the minimum requirement for the Lord's grace is absent in me." That takes him to the conception that, "I have no qualification. I am completely empty."

A devotee feels within his heart that he is not only unfit but too despicable for the Lord's service. Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami says: "I am lower than a worm in stool and more sinful than Jagai and Madhai (jagai madhai haite muni se papistha purisera kita haite muni se laghistha)." We should not be discouraged when we think we have not even the least bit of merit which is required for the service of the holy name of Krishna, for this kind of consciousness is natural for a devotee.

At the same time, we must guard ourselves from an insincere conception of our own devotion; this is our enemy. To think, "I do not have the least liking or taste for the Lord." is all right. But to think, "I have some taste, some earnestness, some devotion for the Lord," is dangerous.

The Egoistic World

If we are going to have a connection with the infinite, we must be fully empty; our self-abnegation must be complete. Worldly attainment is a negative thing, and we must withdraw from it completely. We should think, "I am nothing; I have no qualifications for being accepted or used in the service of the Lord. I am completely unfit." We must completely withdraw from the egoistic world and allow ourselves to be captured by yogamaya, the Lord's internal energy. A slave has no position; the whole position is with the master. Everything is His. Realizing this is our real qualification. As soon as we assert that we have some qualifications, our difficulties begin. So Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself says, "I don't find a trace of love of Krishna within my

heart (na prema gandho 'sti darapi me harau)." This is the standard of humility. And that feeling must be sincere; it must not be an imitation. We must be careful. We must not venture to imitate the highest devotees. To genuinely feel, to conceive that we possess nothing and that everything is His-that is the only qualification for chanting the holy name of Krishna.

8/Humbler than a Blade of Grass

*trnad api sunicena
taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena
kirtaniyah sada harih*

"One who is humbler than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree who gives due honor to others without desiring it for himself is qualified to always chant the holy name of Krishna."

Illumination

We should mainly couch ourselves in this mood: we should think of ourselves as the meanest of the mean. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has given his analysis of the meaning of this verse as follows: even a blade of grass has its value, but we do not even have as much value as a blade of grass. We have no positive value. It is one thing if a man is not educated, but a madman is worse than uneducated. He can think-but only abnormally. Therefore, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, "I have some consciousness, some intelligence, but it is all misdirected. A blade of grass has no misdirection. When trampled upon, it has no tendency to spring back in the opposite direction. A blade of grass can be blown here and there by a storm, or by the external environment, but I will always be reluctant to go in a particular direction. If the waves of the environment want to take me in a particular direction, I'll try to oppose them. If you really consider my value, my position is lower than a blade of grass because I have an opposing tendency."

When we want to bring ourselves in a closer relationship with the infinite goodness, we should think, "I have no value. Rather, my value is negative. It is my tendency to oppose the Lord's grace. If Krishna wants to grace me, I try to resist. I am constituted of such an element that I commit spiritual suicide. Krishna comes to grace me, but I oppose Him: the energy that is within me tries for suicide. This is my position, but a blade of grass won't oppose anyone. I have such a nasty position." We must realize that we are in such a predicament. With this concern we may accept the goodness of the Absolute Truth in the form of His holy name.

We should not think that the path will be very smooth; so many troubles may come from outside. When the devotees go to chant Hare Krishna in the street, many people come and shout, "Hey, you monkeys! Red-faced monkeys!" So many forms of hindrances and opposition will come and try to affect us, to dissuade us from this path, but we must practice forbearance like that of a tree. Why has the example of a tree been given? It has been analyzed in this way: if no one pours any water on a tree, it does not protest, "Oh! Give me water!" If anyone comes to disturb the tree, snatching its leaves, cutting its branches, or even chopping it down, a tree remains silent; it gives no opposition. We should try to see how insult, poverty, punishment, or other unfavorable dealings are necessary to purify us, and with minimal punishment we shall be released from material existence.

Through Krishna consciousness we have connected with the highest object of life, the highest fulfillment of life-what price are we ready to pay for that? It is inconceivable. Whatever little demands may be exacted from us, we must accept with a smiling face, considering the highest goal. If we are really confident, if we have faith in our bright future, then we can gladly pay what little price nature wants to take from us.

Krishna-I Shall Teach You a Lesson!"

Once, Srila Gaurakisora dasa Babaji Maharaja, the spiritual master of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura, was going through the town of Navadvipa begging a little rice from different houses. The village people sometimes attack or insult devotees, and as he was going to his quarters they did not spare even such an exalted soul. Some boys were pelting him with stones and throwing dirt at him, and he remarked, "Krishna, You are cruelly dealing with me! I shall complain to Your mother Yasoda about You." That was his outlook, and in that way he harmonized everything. We should learn to see Krishna in anything that comes to disturb or attack us. In philosophical calculation, of course, without God's will nothing can happen. But in a concrete way, a devotee sees, "O, Krishna! You are backing these children, You are disturbing me, and I shall teach You a lesson. I know how to deal with You. I shall complain to Mother Yasoda, and she will chastise You."

The advanced devotees are established in the consciousness that Krishna is behind everything, and they take everything in that way. This attitude is our beacon light, for it will guide us to adjust ourselves with those things that are apparently unfavorable to us. A sweet adjustment is found there, and so we are advised to be more tolerant than a tree. We may not give any opposition; still, opposition will come to disturb us. And we must forbear.

And we must show our respect to others. Prestige is the greatest and most subtle enemy of the devotee of Krishna. Pride is the worst enemy for the devotee of Krishna. And pride ultimately takes one to the conclusion of the mayavadis, the monists. They say, so 'ham-"I am!" Not daso 'ham, "I am subordinate," but "I am of the Supreme Element; I am That: I am He," eliminating from their consideration the fact that we are tiny and suffering in misery. All these practical things are ignored by the mayavadis, the impersonalists, but position, or ego (pratistha), is our worst enemy. In this verse, we are advised to deal with prestige and position in a special way.

The Slave Area of Krishna

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, "You must not desire respect from anyone or even from the environment itself; at the same time, you must give prestige to everyone and everything in the environment according to its position. Show respect, but don't desire any respect from outside." We must be very particular about this, for pride is our hidden enemy, our worst enemy. If we can somehow avoid or conquer this enemy, we will be able to enter into the slave area of Krishna and join those who have given their lives wholesale in sacrifice to Him. The general meaning of this verse is, "Never seek position or prestige from any quarter. At the same time, give honor to one and all according to your understanding."

A Great Insult

When our spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura, went to Vrndavana in the early 1930's, he rode a motorcar. In those days, this was unheard of for a saint. One day, a priest insulted our guru by deprecating the position of Srila Raghunatha Dasa Goswami, the preceptor of our highest conception of spiritual achievement. He boasted, "We are not only residents of the holy land, but members of the cast of high priests (brahmanas). Therefore we can offer our benedictions to Dasa Goswami. He was born in a low-class family, and he himself asked such a benediction from us."

Of course, in great humility, Dasa Goswami once prayed,

*gurau gosthe gosthalayisu sujana bhusuragane
svamantre sri-namni vraja-nava-yuva-dvandva-sarane
sada dambham hitva kuru ratim apurvam atitara
maye svantarbhratas catubhir abhiyace dhrta-padah*

"O mind-my brother! I fall at your feet and implore you: 'Give up all pride and always taste ecstatic love while remembering the divine guide, the holy abode of Vrndavana, the cowherds and milkmaids of Vraja, the loving devotees of the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna, the gods on earth or pure brahmanas, the Gayatri mantra, the holy names of Sri Krishna and the divine youthful couple of Vraja, Sri Sri Radha-Govindasundara."

That priest remarked, "We are residents of the holy abode of Vrndavana, and brahmanas as well, so we are in a position to give benedictions to Raghunatha Dasa Goswami." Upon hearing these words, our guru maharaja, who was at Radha-kunda at the time, began fasting. He remarked, "I have to hear this? This fellow is under the control of lust, anger, and greed, and he says that he can show his grace to Dasa Goswami, the most respected preceptor in our line! And I am to hear that?" Without retaliating against his remarks, he decided to fast.

We also stopped eating, and our whole camp began fasting. Then a local gentleman who came to know that the whole camp was fasting managed to find the blasphemous priest and bring him to our guru maharaja. that priest begged to be pardoned. Our guru maharaja was satisfied and, after showing him some respect, finally broke his fast. At that time someone told our guru maharaja, "They are all ignorant fools. Why should be be so much affected by his words? You should ignore it." Our guru maharaja said, "If I were an ordinary babaji and heard such a remark, I could simply cover my ears and go away. But I am playing the part of an acarya, one who teaches by example. What justification do I have for riding in a motorcar if I do not oppose the remarks against my gurudeva?"

Repeatedly he used this expression: "Why am I driving a motorcar here in Vrndavana?" He said, "Had I been a niskincana babaji, a saint living in seclusion and living only a loin cloth, I would have given no opposition to this man. To save myself, I would simply leave the place and go elsewhere. But because I am riding in a big motorcar in the post of an acarya, a teacher, I must defend the dignity of the great devotees. I have accepted this charge and can't evade these circumstances. I must face it and do everything in my power that such things may not go on undetected or unopposed."

Humility must be adjusted or modified in its practical application. Once, when a Hare Krishna temple was attacked, a gun was used by the devotees to defend the temple. Later there was a

complaint among the local people. They said, "Oh, they are humble? They are tolerant? Why have they crossed the advice of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to be humbler than a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree? They can't be devotees!" So many complaints were coming to me, but I defended them by saying, "No, they have done rightly. The instruction to be humbler than a blade of grass means one should be humble to the devotee, not to a madman."

The general class of men are ignorant. They are mad. They do not know what is good or bad, so their consideration has no value. Who is qualified to judge whether a devotee is offering respect to all and not expecting any for himself? Who will judge whether he is really humble and tolerant-madmen? Ignorant people? Have they any sense to judge who is humble, who is tolerant, and who is respectful to others? There must be a standard by which to judge humility. We are interested in the criterion given by higher thinkers, not the consideration of the ignorant masses.

The Standard of Humility

Of course, anyone may deceive the ordinary public with superficial humility. But a show of humility is not real humility. It must come from the heart, and it must have a real purpose. Everything-humility, tolerance, and pridelessness-must be considered by the judgement of a standard, normal person, not by the ignorant who are like elephants, tigers, and jackals. Should they be allowed to judge what is humility, what is audacity and impertinence? Of course not. Should a devotee think, "The Deity and the temple is about to be molested, but I shall stand by and do nothing. I should be humble and tolerant. A dog is entering the temple; I should show him respect."? No. This is not real humility.

We must have a normal conception of reality. We must not allow these anomalies to continue in the name of offering respects to others. We must not think that we may allow anyone to harm the devotees or molest the temple, that we shall allow the dog to enter the temple, and by doing this we are humble and tolerant, we are showing all respects to others. We are not interested only in the physical meaning of the scriptures, but the real meaning.

That I am humble means that I am the slave of the slave of a Vaishnava. With that consciousness we must proceed. If anyone comes to molest my master, I should first sacrifice myself, thinking, "Because I am of the least importance, my sacrifice is no loss; I must sacrifice myself to maintain the dignity of my guru, the devotees, and my Lord and His family."

We must always understand what is to be honored. We offer our respects to the highest truth, the Lord of Lords; our dealings should be in consonance with that. If we always keep the highest conception of relativity within us, we will see that we are the lowest. If there is danger to our guardians, we shall sacrifice ourselves. All of this should be taken into account when trying to understand the meaning of humility, not physical imitation-butgenuine humility; it is a question of practical realization. Fame and honor must be given to the Lord and His devotees, not to anyone else.

In the higher stages of devotion, of course, humility may have to be adjusted in another way for the paramahansa babajis, the topmost swanlike saints who have given up all connection with this material world. But in the preaching stage, the second class devotee must accept things differently. As our guru maharaja said, "Had I been in the role of a babaji, a nonassertive, reclusive saint, I would have walked away from the place without offering any opposition. But when we are preaching and have taken the responsibility of leading so many souls to the domain of the

Lord, our adjustment must be made accordingly." Generally , we may be indifferent to those who are personally inimical to us, but when we preach on behalf of the Lord in an organized way, our duty changes: we cannot be indifferent to antagonists.

It is mentioned in the scriptures by Jiva Goswami that according to one's own particular status, these things should be taken into consideration and the necessary things should be done. He has given his decision that if the devotee has a position of power, if he is a king, and if someone repeatedly blasphemes a real Vaishnava, or saintly person, then the king should enforce corporal punishment by banishing the offender from his state or by cutting out his tongue (vaisnava nindaka jihva hata). That is not the duty for ordinary persons; if they act in such a way, there will be a riot. We should not be eager to inflict physical punishment upon anyone.

Hanuman is a Vaishnava, but he is seen to destroy so many lives. The same is true of Arjuna and so many other devotees. Even Krishna and Ramacandra are also seen to kill so many demons in war. Simply a physical show of meekness does not constitute the real meaning of humility. When there is an insult to the guru or the Vaishnavas, a devotee will oppose the blasphemers according to his might.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura, in one of his songs, says that we should not only tolerate the evil-doings of others and a disturbing environment, but we should do good to those by whom we are being tortured. The example is given of a tree. One who is cutting the tree gets shade and comfort from the tree even while cutting it down. In conclusion, he says that humility, mercy, respect for others, and renunciation of name and fame, are the four qualifications for chanting the holy name of Krishna.

We are the meanest of the mean. We should always be conscious that we are beggars. We should think, "Although I am a beggar, I've come to beg for the highest thing; let no disturbance dissuade me from my attempt." At the same time, our attitude toward the environment should be respectful.

In this way, by becoming educated in the Krishna conception of divinity, everyone should be given respect according to his position. It is the guiding instruction in the worship of the holy name (nama-bhajana) that we must take the position of the slave of the slave of the slave of the Lord. If you want to chant the name of Krishna, then don't waste your energy with the trifling things of this world. Don't allow your attention to be disturbed by tiny acquisitions like prestige or gain which is relative to money or physical comfort. Remember, you are trying for the greatest thing, and all other things are very small in comparison to Krishna consciousness. So, don't waste your energy and valuable time. Be economical. You have the chance to achieve the highest goal of life.

9/Unalloyed Devotion

*na dhanam na janam na sundarim
kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye
mama janmani janmanisvare
bhavatad bhaktir ahaituki tvayi*

"O Lord, I have no desires to accumulate wealth, followers, beautiful women, or salvation. My only prayer is for Your causeless devotional service, birth after birth."

Illumination

We should try to move in this direction. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, "I don't want any money (na dhanam), I don't want any popularity or manpower (na janam), I don't want the company of beautiful ladies (na sundarim). I don't want a good name, or the fame of a poet (kavitam va)." This is the general meaning of this verse, but it has been deeply dealt with in the commentaries of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati and Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura.

Our guru maharaja has commented that in this verse, wealth, followers, women, and scholarship represent duty, wealth, sense pleasure, and salvation (dharma, artha, kama, moksa). Bhaktivinoda Thakura has explained that in this context, "wealth" means the wealth which comes from following one's prescribed duties. It can also mean artha, economic development. He says that "followers" means physical relationship for comforts: wife, children, and so forth. The word sundarim means kama, the company of beautiful ladies. And kavitam, poetry, represents moksa, liberation. Liberation apparently has a high value but really, like poetry, it is only flowery words. Liberation is imaginary because the ultimate result of liberation is that one's existence vanishes.

Service Capitalists

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, "O lord of the universe, I only pray for spontaneous devotion to You without motive for any reward. I want a natural serving attitude." Prema means affection, love. Prema means, "I shall serve you, and in remuneration you must give me more of a tendency to serve you—more energy and more hankering to serve you. My affection for you will be enhanced and the interest will become capital just as in the money-lending business." In this way, a devotee prays to Krishna, "I am serving you, and if you want to pay me something, then give me more capital to increase my serving tendency so it may be more enhanced.

Wherever I am born according to my karma, I aspire only for your service, my Lord, and I pray for unmotivated service, not for anything else in return." The general temptation that surrounds us on four sides is of four classes: money, followers, women, and liberation, and that means dharma, artha, kama, and moksa. In this way, the gradations of different goals of life have been scientifically represented.

But Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, "I have no attraction for any of these things, but only for You, my Lord. I don't even aspire after liberation. I will not even ask, "Give me liberation, for, being liberated, I will be able to serve You better." That sort of condition must not be placed on divinity.

This is the purest of prayers. "According to my karma, I may be bird or beast, here or there, or even in hell—it does not matter. My whole aspiration is concentrated on one thing alone: I pray that my attraction for You may never be lost. I pray that it may always be enhanced."

Bhakti, devotion, is ahaituki, causeless. It is quite natural and has no other aspiration. Someone may say, "If interest is always being reinvested as capital, I will never enjoy the profit," but we are interested in enjoyment by self-giving. "Let others enjoy at my cost"—that is the basis of the highest enjoyment. The devotee thinks, "Let Krishna enjoy with others—I will be the scapegoat."

Bhaktivinoda Thakura says that when a baby has no knowledge, and an enemy or a disease comes to attack him, he cannot defend himself. In the same way, in the beginning, when one's realization of the holy name is in the childlike stage, then crimes and offenses against the name can prevail. When one's realization is grown up, no offense can approach him, but so many offenses may come and attack the beginner.

The Suicide Squad

Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, "The holy name is so beautiful, gracious, and charming. Let me die along with all the offenses against it so others may enjoy its nectar." He wants to sacrifice himself just as in wartime, with bombs under their armpits, the suicide squad would jump into a ship's chimney. The suicide squad began with Japan's campaign against the British, and when Hitler heard of their fearlessness, he said, "We have something yet to learn from Japan." So, Bhaktivinoda Thakura prays, "I want to finish myself along with all the offenses against the name, that others may enjoy the nectar of the holy name."

Vasudeva Datta also prayed, "Give the sins of all souls to me, and throw me into eternal hell, so that they may benefit. Give them love of Krishna." By that highly generous sentiment, he does not die. It is said, "Die to live." When we have so much appreciation for the Lord that we feel this kind of sentiment, we find a living attainment of higher life. That is the enjoyment we want.

The last verse of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's Siksastakam will explain this feeling. Another example of this is found when the great sage Narada came to the gopis and asked them for the dust of their lotus feet for the treatment of Krishna's headache. Here we find self-abnegation to the highest degree, and that is the whole point of devotion. The very life of a devotee is based on sacrifice. As much as there is sacrifice, there is benefit. And sacrifice means "Die to live." This is a favorite saying of mine. These are Hegel's words: "Die to live." Krishna is the highest consumer known to the world. We should not hesitate to give ourselves to Him.

10/King of the Land of Love

*ayi nanda-tanuja kinkaram
patitam mam visame bhavambudhau
krpaya tava pada-pankaja-
sthita-dhuli-sadrsam vicintaya*

"O son of Nanda Maharaja, I am your eternal servant, yet because of my own karma, I have fallen into this terrible ocean of birth and death. Accept this fallen soul and consider me a particle of dust at Your holy lotus feet."

Illumination

Here, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu prays, "O Lord, please consider me; I want to enter into the realm of Your merciful glance. I do not know how to take proper care of myself, and so I invite Your care. Please accept me and give me entrance. You are my guardian. I want to live under Your protection."

And who is He? We hear of different conceptions of God, but here we have come to a beautiful conception of God-Krishna, the son of Nanda Maharaja. This is found only in Vrndavana.

A great spiritual scholar, Raghupati Upadhyaya, once met Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu near Mathura. There, they had a discussion and Mahaprabhu asked him, "Whom do we want to have as our master? Who is the final goal of our life?" Raghupati Upadhyaya answered:

*srutim apare smrtim itare
bharatam anye bhajantu bhava-bhitah
aham iha nandam vande
yasyalinde param brahma*

"Those who fear rebirth in this world may follow the advice of the Vedic scriptures-others may follow the Mahabharata-but as for me, I follow Nanda Maharaja, in whose courtyard the Supreme Absolute Truth plays as a child."

In the system of varnasrama-dharma, Vedic social duty, the people in general are under the guidance of the smrti, Vedic law. In this way, they are engaged in bodily duties with a color of godliness. Those who are free from physical demands, however, who are trying to transcend this life of enjoyment and exploitation, generally take their guidance from the Upanisads because higher advice is given there. Raghupati Upadhyaya says, "I don't care for all these things, but I feel a need to follow the guidance of my heart. I am not so much concerned with the brain; I consider that real peace has its connection with the heart. And my heart is always attracted by Krishna's father, Nanda. Krishna is said by authorities to be the Supreme Absolute Truth, and that absolute is crawling in the courtyard of Nanda Maharaja, so I see concrete reality there."

How has Nanda attracted the Supreme Absolute Truth? In the Srimad Bhagavatam (10.8.46), the devoted King Pariksit Maharaja asks the boy saint Sukadeva Goswami:

*nanda kim akarod brahman
sreya evam mahodayam
yasoda ca maha-bhaga
papau yasyah stanam harih*

"O knower of Brahman, you are always merged in the exclusive conscious world. No trace of any mundane objective reverence can be found in you, for you are always engaged in the subjective world of spirit. Never is your consciousness thrown towards this objective world of ours. And you say that Krishna is the Supreme Absolute Truth. I ask one question of you, my master: what duty did Nanda discharge, what sort of realization did Nanda have that the Absolute Truth is so intimate with him that He appears as Nanda's son and crawls about in his courtyard? He seems to be under Nanda's clutches. What is this? This is a most wonderful thing. Is it possible?"

The Supreme Substance Sucks Her Breast?

"The yogis, the rsis, the great scholars and penance-makers say that they sometimes have a rare peek into their object of aspiration and realization, and then they come back suddenly. They can't keep their attention in that plane for long periods of time. How is it possible that the Supreme Substance sits on the lap of Yasoda and sucks her breast? If such things are real, if it is at all pos-

sible, then why should I not be attracted by that method by which I can have some much intimacy with the highest entity?"

In his prayer, Raghupati Upadhyaya expresses a similar ego. He says, "I don't want to be entangled in the subtle discussion and analysis of the scriptures; I just want to surrender myself to Nanda and his party. I want to enlist my name in the group where Nanda is the master guide."

By the exercise of energy (karma), we can attain a good destination; without faith in the achievements of karma, we may try for salvation by raising our consciousness (jnana). But if we inquire into the solution of life with the help of the experts of that higher spiritual realm like Nanda and his party, we can enter into the land of love and dedication.

My faith, my common sense about religion, tells me that if I see that Supreme Absolute Truth who is so rare and find Him real, concrete, and intimate, appealing directly to my heart, then why should I engage myself in wild-goose chasing? I shall appeal directly to the object of my search. If someone tells me that a hawk has snatched my ear, should I chase the hawk without first touching my ear to see if it is still there? If I can have the Absolute Truth so intimately, why should I allow myself to run hither and thither? If I find that the Absolute Truth has kindly come with all His charm, and that His charm is not a secret and many personages are being attracted by Him, then should I run after the phantasmagoria of the the meditationists, the abstractionists and renunciationists? Never.

It is common sense. The straight understanding is given by authorities that Krishna, the son of Nanda, is Supreme. So when we have come up to that standard, then we can ask, "O son of Nanda, Krishna, king of the country of love: I appeal for Your affection. I am Your servant. I feel within myself that I have some connection with You. I am subordinate to You, but somehow, I am in adverse circumstances. I feel that there are so many enemies within me that are trying to take me away from You that I can't give my attention to You all the time. At the same time, I feel from the inner plane of my heart that You are my master, You are all in all to me. My heart won't be satisfied without your companionship. So I appeal to you: I am under unfavorable circumstances; I am suffering, and without Your grace, I don't find any means of relief from my present imprisoned position."

The Soul-Like a Ray of Sun

Here it is said, "I feel that I am not eternally connected with You; if it were so, then this separation would have been impossible. Unlike an avatara, I am not Your plenary portion." Other incarnations of the Supreme Lord are plenary expansions of Him (svamsa), but the jiva is a partial representation of His potency (vibhinnamsa). In Bhagavad-gita, Krishna says that the living entities are His eternal parts and parcels. The soul comes from marginal potency (krsnera tatasthasakti, bhedabheda prakasa). And the soul is an atomic fragmental part of the Lord's potency like a ray of the sun. But here, the devotee prays, "I'm not part and parcel of Your own body, I'm not even a ray, but my representation is nearer to that of a particle of sand, a particle of dust-not even a particle of the ray coming out of the luster of Your body." In this way, Sriman Mahaprabhu is representing on our behalf that our petition must be of this type: "I cannot indulge myself in thinking that I possess such fortune that I may be considered an inseparable part of You. I am a separable part, but I also want Your grace. Please be kind upon me; I invoke Your mercy for a special grant. Accept me in any position in Your connection-even the lowest position. At least this must be sanctioned. Consider me a particle of dust at Your feet. This is my prayer."

11/Hankering for Perfection

*nayanam galad-asru-dharaya
vadanam gadgada-ruddhaya gira
pulkair nicitam vapuh kada
tava nama-grahane bhavisyati*

"O Lord, when will tears flow from my eyes like waves? And my voice tremble in ecstasy. When will the hairs of my body stand on end while chanting Your holy name?"

Illumination

In this verse, the devotee's prayer has been granted and he has acquired a position in Krishna's domain. Now his ambition has no end. Although he is posted in a safe position, he is again praying for further promotion. First he aspired only for an insignificant position as the dust under the soles of Krishna's divine feet. Then, the grant came. The touch of Krishna's holy feet came to the dust and the dust was converted as if by a magic wand. Now a greater, higher demand automatically comes.

The devotee thinks, "What is this? I prayed only to become the dust of the soles of Your feet, but what do I now feel within me? I am the dust of the earth, and You are the Supreme Absolute Truth. But by the very touch of Your lotus feet, dust has been converted into such a great and inconceivable substance. I wonder, 'How is it that I have been transformed?' Now I find that my demand is for greater intimacy. First I aspired for servitude but now, by the touchstone of Your lotus feet, that hope has been converted into spontaneous attraction (raga-marga)."

The King of Affection

Spontaneous attraction can only mean Krishna, not Narayana or Ramacandra. Krishna means "one who is worshiped by divine love and affection." He is the king of affection, the center of affection and love. The devotee's whole conception of devotion changed just by coming in touch with Krishna's lotus feet, and he was graced by the demand for more intimacy; greater love and affection came to grace that servitor.

He was raised to such a plane of dedication that his prayer has changed. He thinks, "What is this? I can't check my tears. They are coming incessantly, and when I try to chant Your name, my Lord, I feel that I am losing control. Some interference from another quarter is moving me, disturbing my normal thinking and aspirations. I feel I am in the midst of another plane. I am nowhere. I have lost control; I have become a doll in the hands of some other power.

Lotus Feet-Magic Wand

"My aspiration is taking me towards something else. Now I not only want a connection with You as a servitor from a distance, but coming in touch with the magic wand of Your lotus feet, my aspiration has changed. I see that so many devotees are engaged in Your service and chanting Your name, and seeing this, my hopes have been raised.

"I want to be lifted to that position. I can visualize that position from far away, but now my earnest prayer is that I may be raised to that level. Your connection has given me such thirst. I want to be handled by You. Play with me as You like in Your own way. My heart hankers after such a relationship with You. When I chant Your name with this feeling, I find that my previous conception has changed and my new hankering is for the standard of spontaneous love. I pray that You lift me into that plane of Your divine affection and love."

12/Forever Without You

*yugayitam nimesena
caksusa pravrsayitam
sunnyaitam jagat sarvam
govinda-virahena me*

"O Govinda! Without You, the world is empty. Tears are flooding my eyes like rain, and a moment seems like forever."

Illumination

Sometimes this verse is translated, "O Govinda, without You, I feel a moment to be twelve years or more." The word yuga is sometimes translated "twelve years." Some devotees say this is because Mahaprabhu experienced the most intense separation from Krishna in the mood of Radharani for twelve years. In the Sanskrit dictionary it is said that one yuga means twelve years. That is one conception. Another meaning is "millenium" or "age." A yuga can also mean an unlimited amount of time.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, "One moment seems like an unlimited period of time. And My eyes are shedding tears like rain. The rainy season produces so many floods, and now it seems to Me that My eyes are flooding. The visible is becoming invisible to Me. I am so withdrawn from the present environment that I can't see anything. My mind fels so much internal attraction towards the center of the infinite that wherever I cast My glance I see nothing. Everything appears vacant, because I feel as if Govinda has withdrawn from Me.

Sri Krishna-Reality the Beautiful

"Such a peculiar sort of feeling is within me-I have no interest in anything. All my interest is drawn towards Govinda, and to such a degree that I am a stranger to my present environment. I have nothing: no consciousness. It has gone somewhere else-towards the infinite. When there is a

drought, all the rivers and lakes dry up. The water is drawn towards the gas world. Nowhere is a drop of water to be found. It is something like that. All charm is withdrawn so extensively that everything is empty. My senses, mind, and everything else has been drawn up, attracted by the all-attractive, all-charming, all-sweet Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, reality the beautiful." Sometimes it seems that the gap between union and separation is like so many millenia. A devotee thinks, "I have lost the consciousness of meeting Krishna long, long ago." He has a faint remembrance: "I had some union with Krishna, but I left that so far behind, so far off, that it appears to be an unlimited gap of time. I once had a faint recollection, but now it is gone, perhaps forever." He feels such a great degree of disappointment and despair.

This is the standard of the infinite world. Just as we measure the distance of the planets and stars by light years, here the transcendental temperament is being measured by such a standard. What audacity we have to deal with things so great and beyond our jurisdiction.

At first the devotee, thought, "If I am raised to that standard of service, my heart will be fulfilled. My thirst will be quenched, and I will feel some ease and satisfaction within me." But the development of his devotion took him to an unexpected plane of life. It is the nature of divine love that when a drop of that medicine is given to a hankering patient, the patient thinks he is cured, but he is taken into a dangerous position.

He thinks, "Seeing the devotees shedding tears incessantly, the hairs of thier bodies standing on end, their voices choked up while chanting the name of Krishna, I was charmed. Those symptoms attracted me and I thought that if I could attain this, I would feel real satisfaction, but upon attaining that plane, what do I find? Just the opposite."

Coming into real connection with the infinite, he feels hopeless. He thinks, "There is no limit to progress. Rather, as much as I come in intimate connection with the infinite, I feel hopeless." The more we advance, the more we find it unlimited, and finding it unlimited, we become hopeless but we can't turn back. There is no possibility of retracing our steps; we can only go ahead. This is the spirit of a genuine devotee.

Finding the infinite characteristic of our prospect, we can't leave-we become hopeless, thinking, "The highest kind of nectar is just before me, but I can't taste it-I am unable to touch it or get it in my fist. Still, its charm is so great that I can't retreat from this entanglement. And without that, a small span of time seems like millions of years."

Rivers of Tears

The devotee thinks, "Oh, long, long ages have passed away; still I am in want! I am trying to get it, but I can't get it, and time is passing. Time is also infinite. So many rivers of tears take birth from my eyes; tears profusely run down from my eyes over my body, but I don't find the position of success within my reach. My mind is fully vacant. I can't find any trace of my future. I have no charm, no attraction for anything else that might seem to console this diseased body.

"I find no possibility of solace from any other quarter. All alternatives have been eliminated. I am fully in the clutches of Krishna consciousness and love of Krishna. If there is anyone who can come to my relief, help me! I am lost. I am helpless. If there is anyone who can help me, please come to my rescue."

Caitanya Mahaprabhu says that when we are deeply situated in love of Krishna, we can't leave it, but our thirst increases and we feel no satisfaction. We are in the midst of such an apparently horrible position.

The hankering for Krishna which awakens in one's mind takes this direction. When a devotee really comes in connection with Krishna, his position will be all-eliminating and all-exclusive. His complete concentration will be on Krishna.

In this verse, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu describes how a devotee goes further, awakens a higher conception of Krishna, and then, seeing Krishna just before him but not getting Him, feels this kind of separation. The more he progresses, the more he finds himself in this position of hopelessness. This highest advice of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu helps us adjust ourselves to this intense mood of separation. He tells us, "You are going to be lost in Krishna consciousness. And what will be your position? You are a drop and you will be thrown into the ocean of divine love."

13/Union in Separation

*aslisya va pada-ratam pinastu mam
adarsanam marma-hatam karotu va
yatha tatha va vidadhatu lampato
mat-prana-nathas tu sa eva naparah*

"Krishna may embrace me in love or trample me under His feet. He may break my heart by hiding Himself from me. Let that debauchee do whatever He lides, but He will always be the only Lord of my life."

Illumination

This is the greatest medicine for the devotees. We have come to measure the immeasurable, but we must always embrace this principle. In attempting to connect ourselves with the infinite Lord of love and beauty, we must remember that He is the infinite. He is only one to us, but He has many devotees like us to deal with. He may embrace us with much affection and adoration, but we must be prepared for the opposite. We may stick to His feet, but He may cruelly trample us. We have caught hold of His holy feet with great hope, with our whole heart; still we may find that He tramples us and does not care for all our attempts and affection.

We may be giving our best and find that our offering is being hatefully dishonored. He may embrace us, but at the same time we must be prepared that His dealings may be extremely cruel. He may trample all our offerings beneath His feet. We must be prepared for both His adoration and His hateful negligence. We should be prepared for any adverse circumstances.

Krishna may be indifferent. He may not care. And when He is punishing us, He is nearer, but when He is indifferent it is even more intolerable than punishment. The devotee thinks, "Krishna is ignoring me, neglecting me so much that He does not like to keep any connection with me. Doesn't He know me? Am I a foreigner, unknown to Him?" We may accept punishment as a boon, but indifference is even more heart-rendering.

The pain of separation felt by a devotee may even go a step higher. Krishna may affectionately embrace another right before our eyes, in front of our face, without caring even a little for us. We may think, "This is my claim, my right," but that may be given to another right in front of our faces. That will be a source of increasing trouble to us.

This is the law of affection. The law of love cannot tolerate indifference. It is too much to tolerate, but we must be prepared for that. We must be prepared from the beginning that this is the meaning of krsna-prema, divine love for Krishna, because He is an autocrat. He is love. Divine love means mercy, and not justice. There is no law there. And we have selected divine love to be our highest fortune, so we must be prepared to be treated without justice. There is no justice in divine love; it is free. It may flow anywhere and everywhere. This is the very nature of divine love, so we can't make any claim-we have no rights.

This is the nature of the highest thing, and it is extremely rare. But unhesitating adherence to that principle is required from our side. It is real love, and you must be prepared for that. In all adverse circumstances, this is the real nature of krsna-prema: die to live. If you can accommodate all these different stages, good or bad, then you can enter this exalted plane.

Love is Above Law

Justice is within law; mercy is above law. Prema, divine love is also above law, but it has its own law. Another verse whose meaning runs parallel to this one is given by Srila Rupa Goswami Prabhupada:

*viracaya mayi dandam dinabandho dayam va
gatir iha na bhavatah kacid anya mamasti
nipatatu sata-koti nirbharam va navambhas
tad api kila payodah stuyate catakena*

There is a kind of small bird named cataka that only drinks rainwater. It never drinks any water from the earth, whether it is from a river, fountain, or lake. Its very nature is that with its mouth upward, it hankers after rainwater. Srila Rupa Goswami gives this example to show how a devotee should always be waiting in expectation of the "rainwater" of Krishna-love, and no other love.

The devotee prays to the Lord, "You are the friend of the fallen, so I have some hope. You may grant Your grace, or severely punish me-in either case, I have no other alternative but to wholly surrender to Your lotus feet."

Our attitude of surrender should be just like that of the cataka bird, who always has his eyes fixed upward, praying for rainwater. Rainwater may come profusely-only enough to fill up his small belly, but enough to drown his whole body. Thunder may come from above; a bolt from the blue may come and finish his small body, and send him to the nonexistent quarter, but still the nature of that bird is to pray exclusively for rainwater. He won't take water from any other place under any circumstance. Our attitude towards Krishna should be like that: whether or not He extends His gracious hand towards us, it is our duty to surrender unto Him.

In this connection, one verse comes to my memory. When Sri Krishna met Srimati Radharani and the gopis in Kuruksetra after a lone separation of perhaps a hundred years, He felt that He had committed a great crime by separating Himself from them. Approaching near the gopis, especially Srimati Radharani, and remembering their qualities of love and surrender, He felt like the greatest criminal, so much so that He bent down to touch the lotus feet of Radharani.

One poet has represented the scene in this way, and that poem has been collected by Rupa Goswami in his Padyavali. Krishna was at that time the paramount king of India. But when He came in connection with the gopis and the atmosphere of Vrndavana, He felt like a criminal, and bending down, He was just about to touch the lotus feet of Radharani, when Radharani, drawing back, remarked, "What are You doing? Why are you coming to touch My feet? This is astounding. Have you lost Your mind?"

"I am the Real Criminal"

You are the master of everything. No explanation can be demanded of You. You are swami. You are my husband and master, and I am Your maidservant. It may be that for some time You were engaged in some other quarter, but what's the harm in that? What is the fault in You for that? That does not matter, for that right is given to You by scripture and society. There is no crime, no sin on Your part. You have done nothing wrong.

"I am the real criminal. The meanness is with Me, the defect is wholly with Me. You are not responsible for Our separation, so why do You consider that You are faulty, or that You have committed some wrong? The positive proof that I am the real criminal is that I sustain My life; I did not die from the pangs of Your separation.

"I am showing My face to the world, but I am not faithful to You. I could not approach the standard of faith which I should have maintained for Your love, so I am the criminal, not You. It has been written in the scriptures by the saints that the wife should be thankful and exclusively devoted to the husband. This has been ordained in the scriptures. A woman should be devoted exclusively to her husband, her lord. So in this meeting, I should fall at Your feet and beg for Your pardon, for Your forgiveness that I have really no love for You. I am maintaining this body, and showing My face to society; I am not a proper partner for You, so please forgive Me. You are begging My forgiveness? This is just the opposite of how things should be. What is this? Please don't do this."

This should be the ideal of our affection for Krishna. We, the finite, should take this attitude towards the infinite. At any time, He may only give a little attention to us, but we should be all-attentive towards Him. And there is no alternative. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu advises that we have exclusive devotion towards Krishna, and as we are insignificant, our attitude must be of this type.

If we want such a great thing, then it is not an injustice that we should be treated hatefully. Our prospect, undersanding, and adjustment must be of that self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, just as when someone goes to fight for his country on the battlefield, there is no room for luxury or excessive desires.

I remember in this connection that when Gandhi formed his nonviolence army, one of the volunteer soldiers aksed, "Please arrange tea for us." Gandhi told him, "The water of the river may

be supplied to you, but no tea. If you are ready for that then come forward." If we want to connect ourselves with the vrndavana-lila of Krishna, we can make no conditions. Then, we shall understand the method recommended by Srīman Mahāprabhu: humility greater than that of a blade of grass. There should be no complaint from our side. Not only in the external position of our present life, but even in eternal life, any complaint from our side should be carefully eliminated and we must fully accept the ways of the Lord. Krishna may accept us or reject us; we have to take that risk. Only then may we make progress.

In some way or other, if we can enter the group of Krishna's servitors, we will find that everyone has such a nature, and when they meet together, they will console each other in their respective groups. In different serving relationships there are different sections of servitors of a similar nature, and they console each other with talk of Krishna (*kṛṣṇa-katha*). In Bhagavad-gītā (10.9,12)

Krishna says:

*mac-citta mad-gata prana
bodhayantah parāparam
kathayantas ca mam nityam
tasyanti ca ramanti ca*

"My devotees mix together, talk about Me, and exchange thoughts that give consolation to their hearts. And they live as if this talk about Me is their food. It gives them a high kind of pleasure, and they find that when they talk about Me among themselves, they feel as if they are enjoying My presence."

*tesam evanukampartham
aham ajnana-jam tamah
nasayamy atma-bhavastho
jnana-dipena bhasvata*

"When sometimes the feeling of separation from Me is very acute in My devotees, I suddenly appear before them and quench their thirst for My company."

Sweetness Within Pain

In this last verse of His Siksastakam, Srī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has given another very fine and high type of solace. And this has been confirmed by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswami, who has written:

*bahye visa-jvala haya bhitarā anandamaya
kṛṣṇa-premarā adbhuta carita*

"Don't be afraid. Outwardly you may feel a horrible pain of separation, but internally, you will feel an unparalleled type of rasa, the most pleasing feeling of peace, joy, or ecstasy." Externally, there may be pangs of separation, but internally there is the greatest satisfaction.

In this way we are advised by the scriptures, and our practical experience corroborates our faith in this subtle matter. The English poet, Shelley, has written

"Our sincerest laughter

With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those
That tell of saddest thought."

When we are reading an epic where there is cruel separation between the hero and the heroine, it is so sweet to us that although we shed tears, still we cannot leave the book. When we hear about the pangs of Sita-devi, how Ramacandra banishes Her and leaves Her uncared for in the forest although She is with child, this is very painful. We shed tears, but still we read on. There is sweetness within pain. It is possible.

Separation from Krishna is like that. The special characteristic of krsna-prema is this: externally, we feel extreme pain, like lava, but internally our heart is filled with some extraordinary ecstatic joy. This is what Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has given us. As much as we can catch the meaning of His instructions, we shall be prepared for that kind of life. This is the fare to go to Vrndavana, and when we are introduced to so many others like us, then our joy knows no bounds. When we meet others who have the same nature and mind as us, we get solace from them. We need not be afraid. In spite of all these things, we should think firmly that that is our home, and we should want to go back to home, back to Godhead.

We are not foreigners there. Here we are foreigners: every man treats me in any way that he likes. But Vrndavana is most hopeful and full of the highest prospect. It is the place of inner satisfaction. We aspire after that; we cannot but continue aspiring for our real home. What is real joy and ecstasy? We are not acquainted with that. This is our present trouble. Yet as much as we progress in Krishna consciousness, we shall become conscious of a practical feeling of real joy and ecstasy, beauty and charm, and in this way, we shall become more and more encouraged.

Yamunacarya says:

*yad-avadhi mama cetah krsna padaravinde
nava-nava-rasa-dhamany udyatam rantum asit
tad-avadhi bata nari-sangame smaryamane
bhavati mukha-vikarah susthu nisthivanam ca*

"Before I came in touch with the Krishna-love of Vrndavana, worldly pleasure was of much importance to me; but now, if any mundane taste comes in my memory, my face becomes disfigured, and I spit at the thought."

So if we get a slight taste of that ecstasy, then at once we come to the conclusion that there can be no comparison between that and any peace or pleasure here in this mundane world. At the same time, once we are settled in that atmosphere, no pain can disturb or affect us in any way.

There is another side also: although we are advised to be prepared for painful separation, the fact is not so cruel in reality. Krishna says, mayi te tesu capy aham: "I am always with My devotees." Wherever there is an exclusive devotee, Krishna is there like his shadow, always invisibly moving after him. This is the Lord's nature:

*aham bhakta-parardhino
hy asvatantra iva dvija
sadhubhir grasta-hrdayo
bhaktair bhakta-jana-priyah*

The Lord tells Durvasa, "I am the slave of My devotees; I have no freedom apart from their will. Because they are completely pure and devoted to Me, my heart is controlled by them, and I reside always in their hearts. I am dependent not only on My devotees, but even on the servants of My devotees. Even the servants of My devotees are dear to Me."

Krishna is not a Sweetball

We must be prepared for any unfavorable circumstances, but we must not be discouraged. Krishna is most affectionate; His care towards us is most acute and sincere. His affection towards us has no rival. Still, Srīman Mahāprabhu has given us a warning in this verse: "You are coming to search after Krishna? Krishna is not a sweetball from the market that you can purchase and finish so easily. You are trying to attain the highest of the high, so you must be prepared for anything."

At the same time, the devotees will come to us saying, "Have no fear. We are all like you. Let us all walk together in a straight line. Don't be afraid—we are here." We are told that Krishna's devotees are even more sympathetic to us than Krishna Himself. The solace of our life and our fortune is His devotees, and Krishna says: *mad bhaktanam ca ye bhakta*, "One who is a servant of My servant is My real servant." *Sadhu-sanga*, the association of saints, is the most important and valuable thing for us. To make our advancement and progress towards the infinite, our association is our guide; it is all-important. We must stick to this conclusion:

*'sadhu sanga,' 'sadhu sanga,'-sarva sastre kaya
lava-matra sadhu-sange sarva-siddhi haya*

The conclusion has been given in the scriptures that all perfection can be attained by the help of the saints. Good association is our greatest wealth in reaching the supreme goal.

Conclusion

14/A Drop of Divine Love

Only Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu can give the conception of full-fledged theism. It is His grace, His sweet will. It is His own wealth, not the property of many. Krishna is an autocrat. He is the highest. And whomever He selects to receive His own wealth will get it. No one can raise the question of "no taxation without representation"—there is no room for that sort of slogan here.

In order to explain this for our benefit, Bhaktivinoda Thakura, taking himself as a fallen soul, says, "My position is that of a servant of Krishna, but I am devoid of Krishna. What am I? I am a slave of Krishna, a slave of the Lord, but I am devoid of my master? What an ironic thing it is." You can wail, you can repent, you can mourn, but all rights are reserved by Him. And when you awaken to that higher stage of self-surrender, you will get that wealth. But still, we must conceive that Krishna is above all law. Otherwise, surrender is meaningless.

If we analyze the very basis of surrender, we must ask where does surrender begin? In full surrender, there are no rights. Whenever any rights are established, surrender becomes unnecessary.

We cannot think, "We must fight for our innate rights." To a certain extent we may try for our rights in this world, but in Krishna's pastimes this mentality has no place.

"All Rights Reserved"

Even the goddess of fortune, Laksmidevi, cannot enter there, what to speak of others. It is inconceivable. Krishna is not under any law or within anyone's fist. "All rights reserved." Everything is His sweet will. But He is absolute good; that is our solace. We cannot enter His domain as a matter of right. Even Lord Brahma, Lord Siva, and Laksmidevi cannot enter there. But still, if we take the path chalked out by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, we can enter and achieve a position there.

It is so dear, so rare, so valuable and desireable. We must look for the magnanimity of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu which is aspired for by Lord Brahma and Lord Siva. They are praying for a drop of His mercy, but Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu brought that here in a flood and inundated everyone with that nectar, a drop of which is rarely to be had or even thought of. We must approach His mercy with such an attitude of hankering and expectation. His gift is so great and magnanimous—who can understand it?

With two verses of Srimad Bhagavatam, one from the mouth of Krishna Himself, and the next from the mouth of Uddhava, He takes us straight to that highest place, eliminating so many external things. Krishna says:

*na tatha me priyatama
atma-yonir na sankarah
na ca sankarsano na srir
naivatma ca yatha bhavan*

"O, Uddhava! Neither Brahma, nor Siva, nor Baladeva, nor Laksmi, nor even My own self are as dear to Me as you are."

And Uddhava says,

*asam aho carana-renu-jusam aham syam
vrndavane kim api gulma-latausadhinam
ya dustyajam svajanam arya-patham ca hitva
bhejur mukunda-padavim srutibhir vimrgyam*

"The gopis of Vrndavana have given up the association of their husbands, sons, and other family members, who are very difficult to renounce, and they have sacrificed even their religious principles to take shelter of the lotus feet of Krishna, which are sought after even by the Vedas. O! Grant me the fortune to be born as a blade of grass in Vrndavana, so that I may take the dust of those great souls upon my head."

The Progressive March Towards Divinity

The gradation of theism can be traced from Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe, to Krishna's intimate friend Uddhava in Dvaraka. And Uddhava takes us directly to Vrndavana to reveal the highest devotion, eliminating various prospects in our progressive march towards divinity. We have to march on. And the way is that of surrender, of loving devotion, not mere formal devotion.

*vaikuntaj janito vara madhu-puri tatrapī rasotsavad
vrndaranyam udara-pani-ramanat tatrapī govardhanah
radha-kundam ihap gokula-pateh premamrtaplavanat
kuryad asya virajato giri-tate sevam viveki na kah*

"Superior to the spiritual realm of Vaikuntha is Mathura, where Sri Krishna first appears. Superior to Mathura is the Vrndavana forest where Krishna enjoyed the rasa dance. Better still is Govardhana hill, which was the site of even more confidential pastimes of love. But best of all is Radha-kunda, which is situated at the foot of Govardhana hill, and holds the supreme position because it is overflowed with the nectar of the highest kind of divine love. Who is acquainted with the science of devotion who will not aspire for the divine service of Srimati Radharani at Radha-kunda?"

The Heart of Krishna

We must place our faith in these subtle things. Only through faith of a finer order can we be led to that highest quarter. The highest conception is in the heart of Krishna, and we have to enter into the heart of Krishna, not any other place.

Although Krishna's conjugal pastimes with the gopis (madhurya-lila) are supreme, they cannot stand alone: there are many other things which are present in His pastimes. Krishna's pastimes with His friends and parents are essential in supporting His pastimes of amorous love. Conjugal love is, of course, the main thing, but still it is dependent on the other paraphernalia of Krishna's pastimes. There must be Krishna's family and friends and all the different groups of servitors. Even the environment of Vrndavana itself also has its valuable part to play.

And what is Vrndavana? The sands of the river Yamuna, the jungle, the birds, peacocks, and deer, the cows, cowboys, and caves of Govardhana hill, the motherly relatives-everything is there, and it is well-designed and most suitable for the pastimes of Sri Krishna.

Vrndavana is necessary for the pastimes of Radha and Govinda. When Radharani meets Krishna in Kuruksetra, Her mind runs to Vrndavana. She thinks, "Krishna is here and I am also here," but Her mind runs to Vrndavana. In Kuruksetra, Srimati Radharani is hankering for the environment of Vrndavana; She wants to have Sri Krishna's company there. All of Krishna's paraphernalia and divine associates have their own unique value, and cannot be eliminated.

Radha-Govinda cannot be taken away from Vrndavana anymore than Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu can be taken away from Navadvipa. The whole thing is a system. One part cannot be snatched away from the other parts. All the devotees have a necessary part to play in order to create the

harmony of Krishna's pastimes. Otherwise, it would not be living, but dead, artificial, useless. It cannot even be imagined. Krishna-lila is an organic whole.

Srimati Radharani says, "My mind is running straight towards Vrndavana. I have the main object of pleasure, Krishna Himself, but it is useless without the favorable paraphernalia of Vrndavana." So Radharani's pain of separation rises to the highest point in Kuruksetra, where She has attained the object of Her union after a long separation. There, Krishna is very close, but, without being surrounded by the favorable paraphernalia of Vrndavana, She cannot have the real advantage of union. In this way, Bhaktivinoda Thakura has explained the mood of Srimati Radharani in Kuruksetra.

A Revolutionary Guru

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura once revealed the importance of Kuruksetra in a unique way. The words of our guru maharaja were mostly very revolutionary. When I was a beginner with only two years or so in the Gaudiya Math, I was in charge of the Kuruksetra temple. Once, I came to the Calcutta headquarters at the hired house in Ulta Danga for the yearly preaching festival. After the festival I was to return to Kuruksetra. Srila Prabhupada was thinking of opening a "Theistic Exhibition" in Kuruksetra, showing with dioramas how Krishna and His friends came there from Dvaraka, and the gopis came there from Vrndavana.

It is mentioned in Srimad Bhagavatam that during the solar eclipse, they came to bathe in Brahma-kunda, a sacred lake in Kuruksetra. Srila Prabhupada wanted to show that pastime with a diorama, and so the exhibition was arranged. He ordered handbills to be printed, and twenty thousand circulated in the area, inviting people to come for the exhibition.

Vrndavana-For Shallow Thinkers?

In this connection, he told us, "You all know that only the bogus, hollow people and men of shallow thinking like Vrndavana." I was very much perplexed to hear this. I had been told that Vrndavana is the highest place of spiritual perfection. I had heard that one who has not mastered his senses cannot enter Vrndavana. Only the liberated souls can enter Vrndavana and have the opportunity of discussing krsna-lila. Vrndavana is for the liberated souls. Those who are not liberated from the demands of their senses may live in Navadvipa, but the liberated souls may live in Vrndavana. Now Prabhupada was saying that the shallow thinkers appreciate Vrndavana, but a man of real bhajana, real divine aspiration, will aspire to live in Kuruksetra.

Hearing this, I felt as if I had fallen from the top of a tree. "What is this?" I thought. I am a very acute listener, so I was very keen to catch the meaning of his words. The next thought he gave us was that Bhaktivinoda Thakura, after visiting many different places of pilgrimage, remarked, "I would like to spend the last days of my life in Kuruksetra. I shall construct a cottage near Brahma-kunda and pass the rest of my life there. Kuruksetra is the real place of bhajana."

Shrewd Merchants

Why? Service is more valuable according to the intensity of its necessity. Shrewd merchants seek a market in wartime because in that dangerous position, money is spent like water, without any care for its value. They can earn more money if a war comes. In the same way, when Srimati Radharani's necessity reaches its zenith, service to Her becomes extremely valuable. According to its necessity, service is valued. And in Kuruksetra, Srimati Radharani is in the highest necessity because Krishna is so close, but Their Vrndavana lila is impossible. In a football game, if the ball is just inches from the goal, but again comes back, it is considered a great loss. In the same way, after a long separation, Krishna is there in Kuruksetra, so the hankering for union felt by His devotees must come to its greatest point, but because He is in the role of a king, they cannot meet intimately. The circumstances do not allow the Vrndavana lila to take place. So at that time, Srimati Radharani needs the highest service from Her group, the sakhis.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura says that in that situation, a drop of service will draw the greatest amount of prema, divine love. In the pastimes of Radha-Govinda, there are two aspects: sambhoga, divine union, and vipralambha, divine separation. When Radha and Krishna are very near to each other, but can't meet intimately, service at that time can draw the greatest gain for the servitors. Therefore, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, "I shall construct a hut on the banks of Brahmakunda in Kuruksetra and contemplate rendering service to the Divine Couple. If I can achieve that standard where the prospect of service is so high, then there is no possibility of returning to this mundane plane at any time."

The Fifth Note

Upon arriving in Kuruksetra, Srimati Radharani said:

*pryah so'yam krsnah sahacari kuru-ksetra-militas
tathaham sa radha tad idam ubhayoh sangama-sukham
tathapy antah-khelan-madhura-murali-pancama-juse
mano me kalindi-pulina-vipinaya sprhayati*

"O my dear friend, now I am at last reunited with My most beloved Krishna in Kuruksetra. I am the same Radharani, and He is the same Krishna. We are enjoying Our meeting, but still I wish to return to the banks of the Kalindi, where I could hear the sweet melody of His flute sounding the fifth note beneath the trees of the Vrndavana forest." (Padyavali)

Wherever Radharani and Krishna are, Vrndavana is necessary. And Vrndavana means the favorable paraphernalia. In this way, Vrndavana is unique.

When Krishna met the inhabitants of Vrndavana in Kuruksetra, He first came to Nanda and Yasoda's camp after their long separation, to show parental respect to them. In the midst of their great disappointment, they felt, "Oh, our boy has come to see us at last." It was as if life had returned to the dead. After some courtesy was shown to them, Krishna made arrangements to meet privately with the gopis, and suddenly He appeared in their camp. Externally, Krishna was the leader of so many kings in India. And the gopis had come from some unknown quarter, where they lived in the jungle in the society of milkmen. Externally, they had no position, and Krishna held the highest position in the political and royal society. He was the central figure, like the

eyeball in every eye. And they were in a helpless, poor and neglected condition. The gopis pleaded with Krishna, saying:

*ahus ca te nalina-nabha padaravindam
yogesvarair hrdis vicintyam agadha-bodhaih
samsara-kupa-patitottaranavalambam
geham jusam api manasy udiyat sada nah*

The group of gops told Krishna, "O You who have a lotus navel, we know that the great master yogis who have nothing to do with this mundane world try to meditate upon Your holy lotus feet. Their interest is in higher realization in the conscious world. They are said to center their highest attention on Your lotus feet. And those who are busy elevating their life in this world of exploitation are also busy worshipping Your lotus feet to escape the entanglement of action and reaction. The center of interest for the elevationists (karmis) and the salvationists (jnanis and yogis) is Your lotus feet.

Krishna Country

"And what are we? We are simple people from the country with cows as our wealth. We are animal traders who live in the country, trade in the cow business, and sell curd and milk on the outskirts of society. We are neither scientific exploiters (karmis), nor are we the kind of exploiters who do research in the world of consciousness. We only know family life. We have no other qualifications. We are busy with our family life in the lower section of society. But in our audacity, we pray that if at any time You would kindly condescend to extend Your lotus feet to our negligible hearts, we would think ourselves blessed. We are busy in our family matters. We do not know scriptural life or the methods of the salvationists. We know nothing of yoga, jnana, Vedanta or the Vedas. Our ultimate concern is neither with scriptures or moral standards. We hold a negligible position in society and simply pray that in the midst of our family life we may remember Your holy lotus feet. Please grant this to us. We can't expect anything more from You." That was their petition.

Krishna replied to them, saying:

*mayi bhaktir hi bhutanam
amrtatvaya kalpate
distya yad asin mat-sneho
bhavatinam mad-apanah*

"Yes, I know. People want devotion to me to achieve eternal life. To cross the limit of mortality and to have eternal life, they come to Me and worship Me. For these reasons they want My service, but fortunately for you, you have some natural affection towards Me. That will ultimately bring you to Me."

That is the formal or superficial meaning of what was spoken by Krishna and the gopis. But the great preceptors of our line have squeezed out another meaning from these prayers. They are conscious of the real, private relationship between the two parties, so they have drawn out another meaning based on the divine sentiment between the lover and beloved.

When the gopis prayed to Sri Krishn at Kuruksetra, their real meaning was this: "Oh, we remember that one day You sent Uddhava to console us. He recited many scriptural references about how the whole world is mortal, how it is nothing, how we shall all have to die-affection has no great value; attachment must be cut out. He said that we must try to liberate ourselves from any attraction for the environment and attain salvation. You wanted to tell all these apparently sweet things to us through Uddhava.

"Now, You Yourself are also showing us the same path. You say that You are great and that everyone should try, for their highest interest, to think of You." This explanation is found in Caitanya Caritamṛta. The gopis tell Krishna, "Do you think we are yogis who will be satisfied with abstract meditation on You? Can we be satisfied by imagination? We are not a party to that. Neither are we karmis fruitive workers who are incurring a great debt from nature, who come to Your door to get relief, praying, 'O God, please relieve us from all our previous sins.' We do not belong to either of these two sections.

"What are we? We want to live with You as Your family. We are interested neither in abstract thinking, nor in using You to clear off the faults of karma to nullify our sinful activities. We don't want to use You for any other purpose. We want to have a direct family life with You. Don't You know that? And still You send messages through Uddhava, and now this! Aren't You ashamed of Yourself?" This is their inner meaning.

Krishna's Inner Answer

Krishna's answer also has an inner aspect. He replies, "You know, everyone wants Me. Through devotion they want me to help them attain the highest position in the world of eternal benefit. If they have a connection with Me, they consider themselves fortunate. But on the other hand, I consider Myself fortunate because I have come in touch with the valuable affection that I found in your hearts."

The gopis read the inner meaning in that way. And when Radharani could see into the inner meaning of Krishna's reply, She became satisfied. "Wherever He may be in the physical sense," She thought, "At heart, He is Mine alone." She composed her troubles within and returned to Vrndavana thinking, "He cannot but come to join our party again very soon."

In Padyavali, Srila Rupa Goswami reveals the inner meaning of this verse. When Krishna came to the camp of gopis in Kuruksetra, He suddenly found Srimati Radharani and stooped down as if to touch Her feet. Radharani began backing away, saying, "What are you doing! You are trying to touch My feet?" She shuddered, "You have done nothing wrong. You are My master. You are at liberty to do whatever you want. I am Your maidservant and should try with every nerve to satisfy You. You have committed no crime. I am the criminal. How? I still drag on my body and life. This is my crime-I could not die from Your separation! Still, I show My face to the public-I am not worth Your divine affection. The whole burden of breaking the law of love is on My head."

Not a Bit of Divine Love

In this way Srimati Radharani spoke. And in a similar verse, Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu says:

*na prema-gandho'sti darapi me harau
krandami saubhagya-bharam prakasitum
vamsi-vilasy-anana-lokanam vina
vibharmi yat prana-patangakan vrtha*

"I have not even a bit of divine love for Krishna within Me. Not even a scent of love for Krishna is to be traced within Me. You may ask, 'Then why are you shedding tears profusely, uninterruptedly? Day and night, You are always shedding tears for Krishna. How do you explain this?' Oh, you don't know. I don't do this to make a show and deceive the people in general into thinking that I have divine love for Krishna. In this way I want to become famous as a great devotee of Krishna. But I am a hypocrite. Why do I say so? The positive proof is this: I still live. I could not die! If I had any real love for Krishna, I would have died from His separation. That is the positive proof that I have no trace of krsna-prema within Me."

Krishna-prema is so high and attractive that once coming in contact with it, no one can maintain his life without it. It is so high, so beautiful, so enchanting-it is heart-swallowing! It is impossible even to conceive of it. Divine love of such a high degree is known as prema. That divine love for Krishna is not to be traced in this mundane world. If by chance someone had any experience of that high and vital kind of devotion, then by any separation from that, he would die instantly. It is so beautiful and magnanimous. We are out to search only for that divine love in this world. And Sriman Mahaprabhu came to distribute that to the world for our sake.

"Let us Take Poison"

I have heard that a group of people in South America committed collective suicide because they felt that their faithful way of life was going to be destroyed by the present civilization. They could not tolerate that, but rather, they thought, "Let us take poison and leave this world behind. Then we can live safely in the world of our faith. We have no charm for anything in this mundane world. Let us go with peace. We are members of the peaceful world. Let us enjoy that peace which is independent of material acquisition."

We can agree that there is no charm here that shall make us hesitate to withdraw from this world, but we must also disagree and say that our life in this world is valuable. Why? With this life we can acquire a higher aspiration. We can have the chance of acquiring the goal from this plane. This human life is so valuable that with it we can take the path of the highest divine conception. This human body is highly valued and rarely achieved. In Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.9.29) it is stated:

*labdhva su-durlabham idam bahu-sambhavante
manusyam artha-dam anityam apiha dhirah
turnam yateta na pated anu-mrtyu yavan
nihsreyasaya visayah khalu sarvatah syat*

"The human form of life is very rarely attained, and although temporary, gives us a chance to achieve the supreme goal of life. Therefore, those who are grave and intelligent should immediately strive for perfection before another death occurs. There are so many forms of life: the aquatics, the vegetable kingdom, the animals, the birds, ghosts and other living beings, but only in this human position do we hold the key to the complete solution of the problems of life."

If we can use this human life in a valuable way, we can acquire the key by which to become free from the whole chain of life in this troublesome world. We can get rid of the bondage of all sorts of physical and mental troubles. The key is here, in this human form of life. Jiva Goswami says that lower life-forms have insufficient understanding to realize the highest truth. And in the higher life-forms, such as demigods, because previously acquired energy or karma has accumulated on all sides, the chief enjoying elements are surrounding the living being. It is difficult to escape the charm of those influences and begin the prospect of a fresh life in a higher plain of consciousness. This human form of life is the most advantageous position to escape this entanglement and reach the highest object of our divine life.

The Highest Conception of Magnanimity

Sometimes people ask, "Why did Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu choose to give the highest conception of divine love-krsna-prema to the lowest class of people, to the people of Kali-yuga?" But that is the very nature of Sri Caitanya-avatara. Why did the gopis who are considered to be in the most exalted devotees come from a neglected social position? What is the meaning of the highest conception of magnanimity? What should be its nature? To help the most needy.

And because Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu comes from the highest position, He cannot give ordinary things, and His attention must be drawn to the most needy. Is it unnatural? The highest magnanimity must take notice of the lowest and most needy. And if He wants to help them, He will do so with His own coin. He cannot distribute to them only glass or stone chips. When He has the opulence of jewels and gems, why should He search for stone chips to distribute to the lowest level? He must extend to the lowest and poorest people what He thinks to be real wealth.

Mahaprabhu-The Great Messiah

So we should all fall at the feet of the great Messiah, Sri Gauranga mahaprabhu. His devotees say, "If we had to conceive of a place where Gauranga had not appeared, we could not maintain our lives. We shudder to think of living without such a magnanimous friend of Sri Gauranga," How could one live his life without Gauranga? It is impossible. The world is not worth living in without Gauranga.

Sri Gauranga is most magnanimous. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His associates the Panca-tattva have come to raise all souls from their fallen condition. Generally, only deserving persons can gain entrance into Vrndavana, into krsna-lila. But as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Krishna Himself has come down to cure the offenders of their offenses and grant them entrance into Vrndavana. Simply by chanting the names of the Panca-tattva and by remembering their lila, we can be purified even from the lowest position and prepare for participation in Vrndavana lila.

In Goloka Vrndavana, Radha-Govinda are enjoying Their pastimes of divine love within Their own circle. And there is another quarter, where Radha-Govinda are combined as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu-Krishna Himself in the mood of Radharani is tasting His own sweetness with His entourage. We have to realize this through the recommended process. Who is Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu? He came here to bestow upon us the gift that will promote us to the highest goal of life.

Gaura Consciousness

To bring Sri Gauranga nearer to our soul is to get, even unconsciously, a guarantee of our achievement in krsna-lila. For the fallen souls it is more useful to cultivate devotion for Sri Gauranga. That will give us the complete fulfillment of life with least trouble. Devotion to Gauranga will not lead us to any haphazard or misconceived Krishna consciousness, but real Krishna consciousness. We can have full Krishna consciousness-plus something more. What is that? The distribution of Krishna consciousness.

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami, the giver of Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta, the most valuable theological literature that has ever seen the light of day, has written:

*krsna-lila amṛta-sara, tara sata sata dhara,
dasa-dike vahe yaha haite
se caitanya-lila haya, sarovara aksaya,
mano-hamsa caraha' tahate*

"What is krsna-lila? It is the real essence of nectar. It is the gist of sweetness, happiness, and ecstasy. The sweetness of the sweetest thing that can ever be conceived is represented in krsna-lila. Then what is caitanya-lila? In caitanya-lila, that sweet nectar of krsna-lila is flowing in all ten directions in hundreds of streams as if from a fountain. That fountain is caitanya-lila." Although caitanya-lila appears later than krsna-lila, caitanya-lila is the source, the foundation. We see that Krishna appeared in Dvāpara-yuga, in the previous age, and then Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared later, in Kali-yuga. Still, Their lila is eternal. First there is the giver, then the gift. And the gift of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu is that in all the ten directions, He is distributing unlimited streams of sweet krsna-lila to the world.

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami concludes, "O devotees, come! Like so many swans, you must swim in the lake of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's pastimes. From that lake krsna-lila is flowing to the world in different streams. Devotees, like clouds, take nectar from that lake, and distribute that nectar freely to the fortunate souls. Come and live in that lake. Ask the swan of your mind to take shelter in that lake. May that swan swim in the nectarine lake of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu's life and precepts, from where so many hundreds of streams of nectar are flowing in all directions. O devotees, I offer this humble prayer to you."

Nitai Gaura Haribol !