

ALL GLORIES TO SRI SRI GURU AND GAURANGA

(Excerpt for the Web from:)

Heart and Halo

by

His Divine Grace
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Sevāte-President-Āchārya
Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math, Nabadwip

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Published in printed book form by
Ananta Printing & Publishing

under the Divine Guidance of
Om̐ Viṣṇupād Aṣṭottara-śata-śrī-
Śrīmad Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj

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Ananta Printing & Publishing
5025 Venado Ave.,
Atascadero, CA 93422, U.S.A.
Tel: 805-460-9299

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PART ONE

The Soul
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The Key Is In Your Own Hand

There is consciousness of the higher, the subjective world, and consciousness of the lower, objective world. Connection with the lower objective world binds us with misery, and relationship with the superior consciousness lifts us up, gives us real fortune. One result is from dedication, and another is from enjoyment. In a word: enjoyment is bad, and devotion is good. On the side of devotion is the Lord, and on that of enjoyment, misery. “There are so many things to be enjoyed”: this is fascination with hell, with reaction.

**bhaktis tvayi sthitararā bhagavan yadi syāt
daivena naḥ phalati divya-kiśora-mūrtiḥ
muktiḥ svayaṁ mukulitāñjali sevate 'smān
dharmārtha-kāma-gatayaḥ samaya-pratīkṣāḥ**

(Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛtam 107)

In his *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛtam*, Bilvamangala Thākura says: *bhaktis tvayi sthiratarā bhagavan yadi syāt*, “My Lord, if my dedication, my veneration to You is permanent, is in a settled stage; *daivena naḥ phalati divya-kiśora-mūrtiḥ*, and if it reaches to such a height that we can find *divya-kiśora-mūrtiḥ*, a young pair engaged in that highest pastime—if we can reach so far, to find out the eternal pastimes of the Divine Couple, if we can reach to this extent—then we will find: *muktiḥ svayaṁ mukulitāñjali sevate ’smān*, Oh! the facility of liberation, emancipation, with folded palms will come to serve us in any way we like. And, *dharmmārtha-kāma-gatayaḥ srāmaya-pratīkṣāḥ*: *dharma*, the results of dutifulness; *artha*, moneymaking; and *kāma*, the objects of sense perception—they are all ready and waiting outside, and whenever a call comes they will come in front of us, “What do you want, my Master, my Lord?” That will be our position: *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* will wait outside, and whenever we call them they will present themselves: “What do you want me to do?” And *mukti*, liberation, will be always moving around us with folded palms doing service of different types, if in our fortune we can rise up to such a height as to find that Divine Couple engaged in happy pastimes.”

Bilvamaṅgala Thākura showed in his life a peculiar example: how from the house of the prostitute he went straight to Vṛndāvan and got the grace of the Supreme Entity; how in his life he was so much engrossed in, almost swallowed by, sensualism of the lowest type; and from that position, in a single life he could raise himself to the highest stage of realization of the Beautiful.

Mahāprabhu took two books from South India; one was *Brahma-saṁhitā*, and the other was *Kṛṣṇa-karnāmr̥tam*. *Kṛṣṇa-karnāmr̥tam* is about the pastimes of Vṛndāvan, and *Brahma-saṁhitā* shows the ontological basis of the Absolute, how the Lord of Vṛndāvan is the highest conception of Reality.

Kṛṣṇa-līlā is not a matter of history. In history events occur, they happen once and can't reoccur at any time. It is an eternal flow in which what is going on in the past never comes again. There is an expression "history repeats itself," but that is in the similar nature of the event, not the actual fact; history repeats its nature, but what is gone, is gone. Once it has gone, it has gone forever. But in *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*, in the eternal world, it is not so. It may present the same thing every time, at every second; thus it is called *nitya-līlā*, 'eternal pastimes'—crossing the limitation,

the jurisdiction of history. In history, what is past is dead. But the pastimes of the Lord are eternal, *nitya*, always present. Every *līlā* is eternally present; He can show Himself in His eternal forms simultaneously. So in His past, present and future, all events are simultaneously occurring. When He enters the arena of Kāmsa, different groups are seeing Him in different ways. What is seen by one section of people is seen differently by another, according to their own nature. Even the blind can see Him if He wills. If He wills to show Himself to anyone, though blind one can see Him clearly because these eyes of flesh are not necessary to see Him. By His willpower alone He can reveal Himself to any person. That was the case with Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the *Kuru-śabha*. Dhṛtarāṣṭra said, “For the time being, my Lord, restore my eyesight so that I can see Your wonderful form which the others are seeing and praising. You can do anything, so only for the time being remove my blindness.”

“It is not necessary to remove your blindness, Dhṛtarāṣṭra! I say ‘You see Me’ and you will see Me.” And by His order, Dhṛtarāṣṭra saw! His order, His wish is everything. Simply His will is everything, the cause of all existence.

The Kurus wanted to see Draupadī naked, but Draupadī’s appeal reached Him and He sanctioned cloth, and that cloth became infinite, of infinite character. As much cloth as they removed, so much cloth remained. It is the will, the *vicāra*, which is everything. Such great potency of such high quality is in the Prime Cause. We are accustomed to think: “This is good, this is bad,” and “this is possible, this is impossible.” We are accustomed to such considerations within our rules of thought. But these rules do not apply in His case. All of our experience will fail to occupy even a very negligible part of His Kingdom.

He is wonderful. In the example of Vamanāvatāra it is told of His ‘wonderful stride’, *adbutkrama*. With one stride He covered the whole earth, and with the next He captured the whole of heaven. He then needed a place to put His third step, but where? He is *adbutkrāma*, He of wonderful stride; all His steps are wonderful. He is wonder, the source of all wonder to our tiny brain. He is here, He is also everywhere. With His full representation He is everywhere; yet He is nowhere! Everything is in Him, and nothing is in Him! Kṛṣṇa said, “Try to understand My peculiar position, Arjuna.” He is the Mystery of all mysteries. Even our own soul is astonishing to our worldly experience:

**āścaryavat paśyati kaścīd enam
āścaryavad vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ
āścaryavac cainam anyaḥ śṛṇoti
śrutvāpy enam veda na caiva kaścit**

(Bhagavad-gītā 2.29)

We do not even know the extraordinary nature of our own self. It is of a very high order, but our attention is focused towards so many mortal things; we have been introduced to, and captured by, the meanest aspect of the world. This is the consequence of the mood of enjoyment. We want to enjoy, we want to exploit. A good exploiter is a king to us! But exploitation in itself is degrading, very mean and low. It takes us to the lowest position and makes us victims of a great reaction.

Exploitation and enjoyment; we are in the midst of them and do not know anything but enjoyment. We want to understand anything and everything in terms of enjoyment; we are in such a filthy, degraded position. Only, ‘enjoyment, enjoyment’—that is exploitation. But to exploit is the meanest type of nature, it is hateful, and we must get out of the clutches of that ghost of exploitation. And there is another ghost: renunciation, idleness. But the noble thing is dedication, a dedicated life.

There are two ghosts, one of renunciation and the other of exploitation, and we have to get out of that nightmare, that mania, which is based on our selection, our standard in measuring things to be good and bad. Also in exploitation there is division into regular and irregular, or *dharma* and *adharma*.

And then renunciation. So many great stalwarts of that conception recommend a complete cessation of the dynamic life. A dead stop! But that should not be the prospect of any conscious man. A dead stop to life, is that any goal of life for the saner section?

A life of nobility, a life of dedication—and not only ordinary dedication for the environment, but dedication for the highest good—is the highest form of life. In the lower stage that dedication is calculative; in the higher stage spontaneous, automatic. And really, there is joy. Joy is there in quality and quantity; in every way, real life is there. Life is there, and here is the worst shadow, the perverted reflection. And we are told, *uddhared ātmanātmānam*, the key is in our own hand, the freedom by which we can associate with anything, good or bad, and reap the result accordingly.

Ultimately, we are told that the key is in our own hand; none else is to be blamed for our present

condition. But there is always the possibility of noble help being extended to us, and we must accept that. Our past actions also influence us a great deal—whether they were good, bad, or of the eternal aspiration, *sukṛti*. But ultimately the possibility of free action is not taken away from us at any stage; even if we are reduced to the level of taking birth as a tree, there also, the freedom is within. It is hard to think that a tree has got independence, free will, but it is there, in a suppressed position. Freedom is within us also, and we may try as far as possible to understand how it is so, but our freedom is also covered by so many conditions that we may think we are not free but are forced by circumstances. But still, we are free for our selection of any path, good or bad. Our existence is very small and so our freedom is also small and meager, but it is there. Though almost negligible, it exists.

Journey to the Center

Generally, if all our activity is stopped by unfavorable weather, we think “This is very bad!” We are men of action, men who exploit the environment and nature for gathering some energy. We are always trying to collect some energy for our use. That is our nature. Those who live here in this mortal world, their very nature is such: to collect more and more energy and wealth that can be utilized in a time of need. If there is any hindrance to that end we think it is a very bad circumstance, in opposition to the object of our life. But to remind us about the importance of our inner wealth, we are advised that the outer nature cannot do us so much harm as can our internal nature; that is, our apathy to collect more wealth for the inner existence, the inner self. Be mindful of that!

Losing things of this mortal world is not bad; it is all coming and going. The body itself, the center of all this activity, will also vanish; then what is the necessity of collecting so much energy for the

bodily connection? So, awaken your soul, the real person within; search him out and try to help him. That is possible only with the help from the *sadhu*.

Sat-sangha prasaṅgam dīnam, the day in which we do not find any saint, or have any discussion about the real purpose of life, the inner life, the inner substance, that day we are the loser. Be conscious of that. In all respects, in any way possible, mind your own lesson, mind your own interest, find your own self. Be unmindful towards the external world and circumstances and dive deep into the reality, the inner world. Find your inner self and the inner world where you live, where your inner self is living. Try to find your Home, to go back to God, back to Home. Your energy must be utilized for going Home, and not for wandering in the other land, the land of death. Try to avoid the land of death at any cost; always try to find the eternal soil, that soil to which you belong. Try to understand what is your Home and why it is your Home. Home comfort. What does it mean? It means our birth-place—the place from where we are born.

In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* we find this verse:

**satām̐ prasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido
bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ**

**taj-joṣaṇād āśvapavarga-vartmani
śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati**

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.12.25)

“In the association of pure devotees, discussions about Me are very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart. Such talks, which are full of spiritual potency, are a source of sweetness, and by such cultivation the path of liberation from worldly life quickly opens. Then gradually one attains firm faith, which in due course develops into taste, and then real love for Me.”

This was spoken by the incarnation of the Lord, Śrī Kapiladeva, to his mother, Devahūti, in response to her inquiry as to what is the real goal of life and how to attain it. It came about in this way. Devahūti was married to the sage, Kardama-ṛṣi. After passing some years in the enjoyment of married life, Devahūti conceived a child in her womb from the ṛṣi. In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says: *prajanaś cāsmi kandarpaḥ*, “Of Cupids I am He who ensures progeny.” And elsewhere it is said, *prajanāya na rataye*, married life is not meant for enjoyment, but for the purpose of producing good progeny. So, when the objective of their marriage was achieved, the ṛṣi proposed that he retire from

married life. He told Devahūti, “You have a child in your womb and it is not an ordinary child; the Lord Himself is coming. So I am going to live alone for my own higher purpose of life.” Then Devahūti said, “I have such a good partner; I am fortunate to have a saint like you as my husband, but I did not take advantage of your noble personality to learn anything about *brahma*, about the Lord, about my inner life’s necessity and its fulfillment. I did not inquire about that. I was only busy to serve you, to satisfy your desires. Though I had such a noble companion, I did not utilize my fortune. Now I pray that you may stay for some time and teach me, help me in spiritual life, and then you may go.”

Kardama-ṛṣi said, “You will get help from your son. It is the Lord Himself who is coming, not an ordinary child. Remember this, and in time you will receive that spiritual help from Him. So I won’t stay, I shall go now.” He departed, but soon the child appeared and He was brought up by Devahūti. Because of her great motherly affection, however, as her son grew, she gradually forgot what her husband had revealed: that He was not an ordinary child.

In the course of time, when the boy had grown

and was one day absorbed, Devahūti was reminded, “Oh, the mood of my child does not seem to be ordinary.” She could understand that He was engaged in deep thought, and considered: “His father foretold that the Lord would appear through me, and now I see it is true. My son’s mood does not seem to be worldly, but it is from above. His mind is absorbed in transcendental thought.”

She then slowly approached Him: “Child, your father told me that You are not an ordinary boy of this world. You are divine. I wanted some spiritual advice from him, but he told me that You would advise me. For so long I did not heed that, but today Your mood is encouraging me; it is reminding me of those words of Your father and encouraging me to approach You for spiritual advice. Be pleased to advise me about what is spiritual truth. Who am I? What is this world? How can I find the proper direction of life? Who is the owner of this world, and what is my duty towards Him? You are not an ordinary boy, so I want to know all these things from You, my child.” Then from the lips of her son came this verse, given in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:

**satām prasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido
bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ**

**taj-joṣaṇād āśvapavarga-vartmani
śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati**

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.12.25)

Lord Kapila said, *satām prasāṅgān mama vīrya-samīdho*, “Talks about Me which are full of potency can only be found coming from the lips of My devotees. Not only lip-deep words, but words that have got depth, spirit, power, that represent Reality; such things come from the lips of My real devotee. Such words are not shallow, but are surcharged with spirit, with life, and can enliven us. *Bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ*, they satisfy both our ear and our heart and give a taste of spiritual joy, *rasāyanāḥ*. Their words are surcharged with the ecstasy of the spiritual world, and color our ear, our mind, and our heart—physically, mentally, and also on the plane of our soul. *Taj-joṣaṇād*, by hearing from the real source, from that real *sadhu*, *āśvapavarga-vartmani*, we are led towards relief from this worldly life. By a gradual process, we attain these things: *śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati*. First, *śraddhā*, ever increasing faith; then *rati*, slight taste; then we get real love, *bhakti*. By *anukramiṣyati*, a gradual process, we are taken towards the higher domain.”

In this way the boy began to advise His mother, Devahūti. This Devahūti-nandana, Kapila, was the son of Kardama-ṛṣi, but there was another Kapila whose *sāṅkhya* philosophy does not recognize God; it only analyzes the material elements, gradually eliminating everything from the spiritual substance. So there are two Kapilas, both of whom gave *sāṅkhya* philosophy*: the divine son of Kardama-ṛṣi (Kardama Kapila) and the other, Sāṅkhyaka Kapila. Kapila, the son of Kardama and Devahūti, gave what is known as *sāṅkhya*, but He has given recognition to the Supreme Lord, Īśvāra, whereas the atheist Kapila claimed *Īśvārā-asiddhe*, there is no necessity of any God to explain the existence of this world. That is his conclusion. The *nyāyikas* (logicians) say that there must be One who has created this world. This world has been created, so there must be someone who has done it. Their highest conclusion is *kartete nyāyikā*, that there must be a creator, and He is God, Īśvāra. But atheistic Kapila says, “No, there is no necessity of any God to explain the existence of this material world: *īśvāra-asiddhe*. His finding, his conclusion, is that there is no necessity

**sāṅkhya*—to enumerate or count

of a creator; automatically everything exists. Only two things are necessary: first, a particle of spirit, and second, matter. Matter and spirit combined, *śiva* and *śakti*, have created this world. There are so many spiritual particles, like specks of sand or dust, and by their combination with matter this world is going on automatically.

Once, while at the Madras Maṭh, I met a gentleman from Madhupur who was a follower of this school of thought. He was an educated Bengali gentleman, and I asked him, “What have you got from your guru, that Kapila?” He said “So many souls are there, *jata-jīva*, and everyone is a *śiva*, independent of this matter.”

I said, “You are satisfied with this explanation?”

“Yes, I am satisfied: *pāsa baddhā bhavet jīva, pāsa mukta sadā śiva*, (the soul while conditioned is *jīva*, when liberated is *śiva*).”

I told him: “Where your philosophy ends, our philosophy, that of the *Bhāgavata* school, begins.”

“How is it so?” that gentleman asked.

“You will have to explain where these *śivas* exist. There are so many *śivas*, like particles of spiritual dust; but should we not think they must be living in some position, and that there must exist some rela-

tionship between them? There are so many, and some sort of relationship must be there between them, and they must also stay somewhere, in some position, some plane. And how are they harmonized together, or are they each an independent unit, all fighting with one another? If not, then what is their nature? The *Bhāgavata* has come to explain about the *mukta-jīvās*, the liberated souls. These souls, who were once diseased, are now free from that disease. In their healthy condition, what do they do? What is their position, their characteristic, their nature, their object, their pastimes? We have to know that. So, *Bhāgavatam* has given us an explanation.”

Devarṣi Nārada asked Vyāsadeva, “Explain what is the normal, natural condition of the liberated souls who are not diseased.” And that has been given. There is a Center, and all function in connection with Him and are all harmonized together.

In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says:

yat sāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate stānam
 tad yogair api gamyate
 ekam sāṅkhyam ca yogam ca
 yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 5.5)

“He has true vision who can see that the *sāṅkhya* and yoga systems are one and the same.” One person is trying to reach the ultimate goal by external elimination, and the other by internal elimination: “this is body, this is mind, this is soul (*ātma*), then super-soul (*paramātmā*),” and onwards. The search is all within. The process of elimination is within. And by that he is trying to reach the core. And the other, by elimination of the elements in the external world (earth, water, fire, air, ether) is trying to understand the Origin.

That is *sāṅkhya*: *neti, neti, neti*, “This is not it, this is not it; this is dependent, this is also dependent; this is not original, nor this, nor this. All are effects. Then what is the Cause?” To inquire through the external process is *sāṅkhya*, and the internal process is that through yoga—*prānāyāma, pratyahāra, dhyāna, dhāraṇa, samādhi*.^{*} So by elimination of the effect we come in contact with the cause; from the gross we start towards the subtle, and we reach more and more subtle planes in the causal direction.

This is the process in both *sāṅkhya* and yoga. But in the beginning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,

^{*} breath-control, withdrawing the senses from their objects, concentration, meditation, full absorption and trance

Śukadeva Goswāmī, who is speaking to Parikṣit Mahārāj, begins his talk by saying that these two, *sāṅkhya* and yoga, and also *sva-dharma pariniṣṭhayā* (fulfilling one's Vedic duty), can all give us liberation, but there is something more:

**etāvān sāṅkhya-yogābhyām sva-dharma-pariniṣṭhayā
janma lābhaḥ paraḥ puṁsām ante nārāyaṇa-smṛtiḥ**

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.1.6)

He says, *etāvān*, so far, by these processes, we are told our liberation may be achieved: by *sāṅkhya*, external elimination; by yoga, internal elimination; and also by *sva-dharma pariniṣṭayā*, discharging one's duty as it is recommended in the Veda. To perform whatever is one's respective duty as it is recommended, without any special aim or object, is *niṣkāma* (action free from personal desire). Because it has been advised by the *sāstra* as my duty in my present position, I am doing it, but in a disinterested way, without any special end. As a *brāhmaṇa*, I am told, "You must do these things," so I am doing them. As a *kṣatriya*, my duty is to keep the peace and control the evil-doers; that is my duty and I am doing it. As a *vaiśya*, I am advised to do such and such. Because it is advised in the *sāstra*, I

am doing my respective duty in a disinterested way, that is, without any special aim or interest. All these three processes—*sāṅkhya*, yoga and Vedic duty—lead us to liberation (*mukti*). But, *janma lābhaḥ paraḥ puṁsām ante nārāyaṇa smṛtiḥ*, after we get relief from the external bondage, the fulfillment of life is in remembering our Lord Nārāyaṇa, the Creator, and our relationship with Him. We must get out of the net we are entangled in, and after getting release from this entanglement we must search out our proper relationship with the Prime Cause. Who are we in our relationship with Him? Here the *Bhāgavata* begins:

**etāvān sāṅkhya-yogābhyām sva-dharma-pariniṣṭhayā
janma lābhaḥ paraḥ puṁsām ante nārāyaṇa-smṛtiḥ**

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.1.6)

Janma-lābhaḥ means fulfillment of our existence, our birth; *lābhaḥ* means the gain, the fulfillment, the end. What is that? *Ante nārāyaṇaḥ smṛtiḥ*, our connection, our reconnection with the Center, the all-harmonizing Center, that should be our goal, and the *Bhāgavatam* comes to tell us this. So many other *śāstras* come to give us release from this external bondage; but with internal progress, after crossing the

marginal plane, we get admission into the *paravyoma*, the special area, *Vaikuṅṭha*. That is, we get the visa: *virāja*, *brahmaloka*, *vedi-paravyoma pāya*. We catch the flow of the current going towards the Center; that is the visa. *Sāṅkhya*, yoga and *sva-dharma parin-iṣṭhayā* can give us the passport to leave the land where we are living, but after that, if we want to gain something, then a visa is necessary.

The Real Judgment of Love

According to Indian medical authorities, there is air, bile and mucus, which correspond to air, fire, and water, three elements in the ether that influence the earth. Earth is mainly influenced by water, and water by heat, heat by air, and all are fighting, struggling within ether. This is the nature of the material world. Then there is the mental world, the manifestation of the mental energy: “I want this, I do not want that; I like this, I don’t like that.” And, the intelligence gives direction to the mind: “Don’t take this, take that.” But it is all within the *ahaṅkāra*, material ego. Above that is the soul, who experiences everything, good or bad. He is called *puruṣa*:

puruṣaḥ sukha-duḥkhānām, bhoktṛtve hetur ucyate

(Bhagavad-gītā 13.21)

“It is established that it is the conditioned living

being, *puruṣa* himself who is the responsible cause of the feelings of joy and sorrow which he experiences in this world.”

This is the difference between spirit and matter. Matter, called *prakṛti*, is energy, but the soul, *puruṣa*, experiences good and bad; he is the person who feels good or bad, sorrow or happiness. He is of one substance, and that which is felt is of another:

kārya-kāraṇa-kartṛtve, hetuḥ prakṛtir ucyate

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 13.21)

“Certainly in this impermanent world all movement occurs through the inherent quality of the predominated material nature, *prakṛti*, which is responsible for both cause (the force of the senses) and effect (the material body).”

So all the activity we find here, all movement, is due to that material energy, and the feeler of everything, the knower, the conceiver, is the soul. The soul is like the eye, an eye seeing anything and everything.

In *sāṅkhya* philosophy, this *prakṛti-puruṣa* relationship has been compared to that of a blind man and a crippled man. A crippled man may ride on the shoulder of a blind man. He who is moving

(*prakṛti*), is blind; and he who is crippled, who is on his shoulder (*puruṣa*), has got eyes to see and can guide. The soul is ‘crippled’; he cannot move, but he can see. The blind man is the commander of the energy, who can move here and there; he can carry, but he is blind. In this way, soul is the knower, the feeler, the subjective existence, and the energetic aspect is that of the force, *prakṛti*. So, there is force and consciousness.

We are so much engrossed with force; we only require the force, the energy, and we have forgotten that we are the feeler of that force! That “feeler” is astonishing; if we try to understand our own self, we will be dumfounded: “Oh, what is this? I am of such a nature! I have nothing to do with this world of mortality; I can live independently of this mortal world? Is it so?”

Then we will be able to understand further, that there is Supersoul. In the material world there are so many different planes: the world of heat, that of water, of air. Everything is evolving from a more subtle plane down to gross things, like stone or wood. Just as there is development in this direction in the material world, so in the subjective world there is also development, but upwards, from the

soul to Supersoul, to Super-Supersoul; in this way there is development and it is infinite. And we are *tatastha*, marginal; our soul is in the marginal position, between higher and lower, between the subtle side and the gross side. The upper side is eternal, it is *sat-cit-ānandam*, eternal, conscious and happy; and here: *asat, acit, nirānanda*. It is *asat*, flickering, every minute it is dying; and *acit*, unconscious; and *nirānanda*, with no feeling of joy or happiness. That is the nature of *this* world and of *that* world. And if we want to have association with that world, we are told that in the highest position there is infinite beauty, love, and ecstasy. That world can come down to us, and we can be taken in as one of the Lord's own family members. We can live as a family member with the highest entity of that world! Mahāprabhu told us it is possible, but only through affection, and not by knowledge or any mystic realization. By affection and love we can attract Him in such a way that we can be given recognition as a family member, a position very near to Him—to such an extent it is possible.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says:

tato mām tattvato jñātvā, viśate tad anantaram

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.55)

“After realizing My proper position, they enter there; that is, into My own special jurisdiction, into My family.” And the *Bhāgavatam* says:

mamātma-bhūyāya ca kalpate vai

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.29.34)

“They get such high recognition which qualifies them to live with Me eternally, as My own. If they selflessly come forward to satisfy Me, leaving aside everything, *ananya bhajana*, if they want Me alone and nothing else, then such is their future prospect.”

marttyo yadā tyakta-samasta-karmā

niveditātmā vicikīrṣito me

tadāmṛtatvaṁ pratipadyamāno

mamātma-bhūyāya ca kalpate vai

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.29.34)

Sanātana Goswāmī has analyzed what is the proper meaning of this expression *ātma-bhūyā*: “My own,” they become “My own.” What is the meaning of “own”? He says it means to enter into His family; and “family” means there is gradation: the servant; the friends and their associates, the filial affection group; the guardian group; and then the highest

group, that of consorthood.

There is one story I heard from my godbrother Vaikānasa Mahārāj, who was a *brāhmaṇa* scholar of Orissa, about an incident which occurred in recent history, in connection with the Jagannātha Temple at Puri, where it was customary that no *kichuranna* (*kitri*) used to be offered to the Lord.

Once there was a raid by the Mohammedans on Orissa, and one of the girls of the royal family was abducted for the pleasure of the Mohammedan general, by his soldiers. He later left the state, but that girl was left on the outskirts of some village or town, and there she gave birth to a child who was a great devotee. It was a very peculiar thing; the girl was also a devotee, but somehow she had to undergo such a horrible experience. She gave birth to a child and he lived on the outskirts of that town. When he grew up he used to cook *kitri*, that is, rice and beans cooked together, boiled into a half-liquid consistency, and he used to offer that to Jagannātha from afar. By dint of his devotion, Jagannātha had to go there and accept that *kitri* offering.

One day the boy was perhaps late in his offering; Jagannātha took the *kitri* but the time was then late for the temple offering, so He had to run back to

install Himself in His position in the temple, and a particle of that kitri was on His lips. The *pandas*, the *pujāris*—the priestly class—noticed: “What is this? How has this happened? We can detect this is not the proper offering to Jagannātha; then how is it here on His lips?” So it was referred to the leader of the *pandas* and he also searched, but he could not ascertain the cause. Then it was taken to the king and he also investigated it, “Who has taken this food and smeared it on the mouth of Jagannātha?”

Finally the priest who had been in charge at the time for the offering of food in the temple was apprehended: “You are responsible! You were in charge of the temple at the time of Jagannātha’s offering, then how has this impure thing come in His mouth? You must explain or you will be punished.” The man was innocent and he said, “I do not know anything; I do not know anything!”

Then, when he was about to be punished, Jagannātha came in a dream to the king as well as to the leading priest: “That man is innocent; don’t disturb him. On the outskirts of the town is My devotee. He offered that food to Me, and I took it, but the time was late and I had to hurry back to occupy My position in the temple, so My mouth was not

cleansed. This is the name of that boy. He is living there; he is My devotee, and I have taken this food there.” And it was as a result of the Mohammedan’s exploitation of the princess that this devotee appeared. So, *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, devotion to Krishna, does not care for the formality of purity or impurity by any worldly considerations; it is independent.

Kṛṣṇa-bhakti is so powerful and does not care for anything. Jagannātha accepted the offering of that boy who was considered to have the worst fate, a cursed fate. The princess was taken by the Mohammedan, and her issue came in the form of that boy, so he was the “curse of the cursed.” But his offering attracted Jagannātha so much.

So, love is wonderfully above everything, surpassing all. Mahāprabhu asked us to accept the path of love, which means giving one’s heart, one’s self, and which is so powerful. Nothing else can attract Krishna. He is very greedy to eat this love, this *prema*. He lives on *prema*. He is the Lord of love. That love has its inner existence, it is the inner existence of all of us. He is Love personified, and there is a tinge within us also; and like ‘birds of a feather,’ love likes love.

Once Mahāprabhu, at the time when He had conquered and captured the Kazi, was leading the

sankīrtana party and was feeling very tired. He came to Śrīdhara Paṇḍit, the poor *brāhmaṇa* who used to sell plantains in the market, to somehow meagerly earn his livelihood. Śrīdhara Paṇḍit had a well, and nearby an iron pot which he used for drawing water. With that pot, which was left outside, Mahāprabhu took some water and began to drink. All the devotees objected, “What are You doing! This pot is always kept outside and is very dirty. We are bringing a clean pot for Your drinking water!” Mahāprabhu ignored them and continued drinking water from that iron pot. He commented, “This is the pot of My devotee Śrīdhara; it is purer than anything.”

In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says:

**api cet sudurācāro, bhajete mām ananya-bhāk
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ**

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.30)

“If a person is an unalloyed devotee who worships Me exclusively, having abandoned all other pursuits based on exploitation and renunciation, even if he commits some abominable action, he is to be considered saintly. He is cent-per-cent pure, because his endeavors are completely on My behalf and his determination is fixed in that resolve.”

This is because one who has really surrendered to

Krishna is accepted by Him as His own, and such a surrendered soul should never be considered impure, a transgressor. So, what is *bhajana*? It is a transaction of the heart, not of any formality. In Krishna devotion, *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, the only consideration is the dedication of the heart. Krishna wants that, and not any external formality of the civilized or non-civilized world. In the case of Lord Rāmachandra also, we see that although in the highest consideration He is the director of moral laws, *nīti*, He could not contain Himself when offered something with devotion by an ‘untouchable’ lady. And that was after she had first taken it herself, after she had taken some sweet. Whatever remained that she considered most tasteful, she kept for Rāma, and He accepted it.

There is another incident that happened in Vidura’s house. While Vidura was out collecting alms, Kṛṣṇa suddenly appeared as a guest at his house. Vidura’s wife received Him, but there was nothing to offer, only some bananas. So after seating Him nicely she gave Him that, but she was offering the peel of the bananas to Krishna and discarding the fruit on the ground. She was so bewildered, overwhelmed by the joy of finding that Krishna was suddenly present in her house, that she was discarding the fruit and giving Him the peels, and He

was eating them.

At that very moment Nārada and Vidura arrived. Vidura exclaimed: “What are you doing? You are leaving the fruit and giving the peels to my Lord!” But Nārada came to her relief: “She is bewildered, but He who is eating is not at all disturbed by the peels! One might think that He would say, ‘Oh, give me the fruit. Why are you giving Me the peels?’ But He is eating without any concern.” Then Krishna answered, “I am eating neither the fruit nor the peels, but I am eating that which is devotion! I am accepting her devotion. Neither the peels nor the fruit can satisfy Me; I need neither the one nor the other, but I live on devotion, Nārada.”

**patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam,
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam,
aśnāmi prayatātmanah**

(Bhagavad-gītā 9.26)

The Lord says, “I accept all those foods that are offered; but actually it is not the food itself that I take, rather it is the purpose behind that offering, the ideal. It is the very spirit of the thing I am concerned with and never the outward show. I am living in the inner world, so with food also it is the inner substance

with which I am concerned, not the external appearance.” Therefore it is said, *bhāva-grāhi-janārdana*, “Lord Janārdana (Kṛṣṇa) sees the mood of devotion.” Devotion does not care for the ordinary rules and regulations of this material world. Still, in our lower condition we are advised to go on with *arcaṇa*, and depending on our stage of realization, what we think to be pure we offer, and what is impure we reject. In the preliminary stage this is necessary for our fortune, but as we advance these external considerations are eliminated and the internal ones are given more and more importance.

There is another story which illustrates this. Vrajen Sil was a big scholar of Bengal, a scholar of philosophy so extraordinary that once after he had delivered a lecture at the World Conference of Philosophy in Rome, the president of the meeting told him, “I took you to be Aristotle!” He was respected as Aristotle, he was such a learned man. He had been a student of Scottish Church College in Calcutta and once was taking an examination there. While in the examination hall, he was given the questions and paper, and began to write his answers. Many questions were there, but he became so engrossed in answering one particular question that

he forgot everything else. So deeply engaged was he in answering this single question that he spent the whole time on it and ignored all the others. When the bell rang and the examination time had expired he was perplexed as to what to do? He had only dealt with one question; but he left his paper and went away.

He was the brightest student of the college, but was thinking that his name could not possibly be on the list of successful candidates because he had only answered one question out of perhaps five or six. But still he was stealthily coming to see if the list of successful candidates had been posted. Then one day he found that his name had appeared at the head of that list. He was perplexed: “How is this? I only dealt with one question and I am at the head of the list; how is it possible?” So he asked the Professor, “Sir, I had answered only one question; how then is it possible that you have given me first place?”

“Oh Mr. Sil, your answer is on the level of a research scholar, not an ordinary student, so I gave you first place!”

So, this is like *rāga-marga* where the formal things are all ignored and the substance drawn out. Although normally Mr. Sil should have placed among the

lowest of those candidates who failed, the Professor was a judge of a bold type and thought, “Oh, his answer to just one question is of such high quality; this student can never be considered to be a failure.” Rather, he was given the highest position.

So, love is such: it does not care for any formality in its real judgment.

An Invitation to the Reader

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