

মহৎসঙ্গ প্রসঙ্গ

On Association with the
Great

Śrī Kanupriya Goswami

Introduced, translated, and annotated
by
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Chapter One

I praise him, the Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇacaitanya, whose grace makes even a lame person cross over a mountain and a mute person recite the Vedas.¹

Among all the embodied beings, the fleeting human body is very rarely attained. Even then, meeting someone who is dear to Vaikuṅṭha is even rarer still.²

At the beginning of this essay on the auspicious topic of the great benefit and influence of contact with those few, very rare great souls, a bit of clarity is needed concerning the causes of the conditions of misery, consisting of bondage to the cycle of rebirth and redeath that is produced by the adverse actions of embodied living beings who are beginninglessly turned away from Hari. In the *Gītā* the Lord himself says:

¹Cc., 1.3.1:

पङ्गुं लङ्घयते शैलं मूकमावर्तयेच्छृतम् ।
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे कृष्णचैतन्यमीश्वरम् ।

²Bhāg., 11.2.29:

दुर्लभो मानुषो देहो देहिनां क्षणभङ्गुरः ।
तत्रापि दुर्लभं मन्ये वैकुण्ठप्रियदर्शनं ॥

Transparency, translucency, and opacity, the [three] threads born out of Nature (Prakṛti), bind the imperishable embodied being to the body, Great-armed one.³

Although by true nature a changeless, eternal, and deathless self, the living being, beginninglessly turned away from Kṛṣṇa, is, through its own adverse works, united by Māyā with a body made of the three threads and as a result of that it wanders through the jungle of cyclic material existence on the two feet of birth and death. From time without beginning it wanders so. Therefore, becoming freed from connection with those three threads, transparency and so forth, is the way for all the living beings to be saved from fear, anxiety, unhappiness, and lamentation and to reach immortality. That is taught in the *Gītā*, too:

Passing beyond these three threads that spring from the body, the embodied being is freed from birth, death, old age, and misery and becomes immortal.⁴

If one is to overcome those three threads, one needs at the root of that endeavor the appropriate faith (*śraddhā*), since at the root of all of the endeavors of living beings the presence of the appropriate type of faith is necessary. The natural faith of the living being who is bound by the three threads is in accordance with the different threads among the three, transparency and so forth, and thus is of three types. By that thread-induced faith the living being strives for a thread-bound object. As [stated in the *Gītā*]:

³Bg., 14.5:

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसम्भवाः ।
निबध्नति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥

⁴Bg., 14.20:

गुणानेतानतीत्य त्रीन् देही देहसमुद्भवान् ।
जन्ममृत्युजरादुःखैर्विमुक्तोऽमृतमश्नुते ।

Threefold is the faith of embodied beings born of their natures: transparent, translucent, and opaque. Hear of that from me.⁵

Therefore, the faith that is needed as the basis of efforts to overcome the three threads should be free of thread or thread-less (*nirguṇa*). Striving for a thread-less object is not produced by the natural, thread-bound faith of the living being. The Lord himself says that by means of a particular kind of faith one strives for a particular kind of object:

Faith in matters of the higher self (knowledge, yoga, austerity, etc.) is from transparency; faith in the rites (that bring one to heaven and so forth) is from thread of translucency; and faith in matters contrary to piety (or the law) is from the thread of opacity. However, faith in my service is free of the threads.⁶

Therefore at the root of an attempt to cultivate pure *bhakti*, free from all the material threads and having the form of worship of the Lord, one must have a thread-free faith relating to the Lord. By means of a faith different from that, a faith influenced by the material threads, it is not possible to strive to cultivate thread-free *bhakti*. For this reason, when one obtains by a some stroke of tremendous good luck thread-free faith, one will be able to engage in the cultivation of *bhakti* for the Lord. And by that *bhakti* one

⁵Bg., 17.2:

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।
सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ॥

⁶Bhāg. 11.25.27:

सात्त्विक्याध्यात्मिकी श्रद्धा कर्मश्रद्धा तु राजसी ।
तामस्यधर्मे या श्रद्धा मत्सेवायां तु निर्गुणा ॥

will easily become freed from the ropes made of the three material threads.

For this reason, the Lord himself has pointed out the way that is the best and the easiest for the living beings among all the other ways of becoming freed from the ropes of Māyā's three threads:

This divine Māyā of mine, composed of the threads, is very difficult to cross beyond. Those who surrender to me cross beyond this Māyā.⁷

Thus, the best way to cross over the difficult-to-cross, three-threaded Māyā is *bhakti* defined as surrender only to the Lord. For the living being, who is a minute particle of consciousness under the control of Māyā, taking shelter at the feet of the Lord, who is unlimited consciousness in control of Māyā is the natural path to overcome Māyā. Nevertheless, as long as at the root of that endeavor, thread-free faith in matters relating to the Lord, has not been infused, even if the Lord himself instructs one to adopt the *bhakti* of faith characterized by surrender, no living being can take it up without that thread-free faith. Therefore it is seen that after giving instructions on topics of rites, knowledge, yoga, austerity, and so forth, as his last order and highest instruction, the Lord himself, offering freedom from fear to the living beings wandering about restlessly on the path of mundance existence in repeated birth and death, calls out to them with great emphasis to give up all other practices and simply surrender to him:

Give up all other duties (*dharmas*) and surrender to me alone. I will free you from all sins. Do not grieve.⁸

⁷Bg., 7.14:

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।
मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥

⁸Bg., 18.66:

To respond to that call, however, one needs thread-free faith related to the Lord. Without that no one can respond to that accentuated call. Therefore, those engaged in rites, those cultivating knowledge, those practicing yoga, and so forth, each according to his or her own respective thread influenced faiths — whatever subject they are engaged in, they remain endowed with faith in that subject. The reason for this is that without being connected with thread-free faith, even the Lord's own invitation to take shelter with the Lord who is beyond all the threads is useless — as long as along with that call one is not infused with thread-free faith relating to the Lord.

In order to reveal this secret to all living beings befuddled by Māyā with her three threads the Lord himself said:

Those situated in translucency, transparency, and opacity worship the gods and so forth, headed by Indra who delight in translucency, transparency, and opacity. Not so do they worship me.⁹

Therefore, one can understand that the appearance or non-appearance of engagement in a living being who is under the control of Māyā in the matter of thread-free *bhakti* for the Lord, the best way to gain freedom from mundane existence, has but one cause — conjunction or disjunction with the suitable thread-free faith relating to the Lord.

The sublime occurrence that is at the root of thread-free faith relating to the Lord, or in other words, the one and only way to

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।
अहं त्वां सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

⁹Bhāg. 11.21.32:

रजःसत्त्वतमोनिष्ठा रजःसत्त्वतमोजुषः ।
उपासते इन्द्रमुख्यान् देवादीन् न तथैव माम् ॥

obtain *bhakti* for the Lord, is association with and service of the great *bhaktas* of the Lord.

By contact with the saintly arise discussions, like medicines for the heart and ear, that reveal my prowess. By enjoying those, faith [ie., *bhakti* as practice preceded by faith], attraction [ie., *bhakti* feeling (*bhāva*)] , and *bhakti* [ie., *bhakti* as love (*preman*)] towards [me], who am the path to final freedom, quickly develop one after another.¹⁰

Now I will begin to discuss, as far as I am able, the nature and greatness of those rare great ones, the lovers of the Lord, who are the only means to attain that very difficult to attain *bhakti* of the Lord.

Bhakti is primarily of two types: threaded and unthreaded. For the embodied living being who is in the state of being threaded or bound by the threads of transparency and so forth, deceit or ignorance must exist. Therefore, as long as that deceit continues, people in general are inclined, in accordance with the threads and their operations, to engage in efforts to achieve thread-bound enjoyment and liberation. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* this point has been made:

That deceit that I call the opacity of ignorance
is the desire for piety, wealth, sense enjoyment and liberation.

Among those the primary deceit is the desire for liberation.

¹⁰Bhāg. 3.25.24:

सतां प्रसङ्गान्मम वीर्यसंविदो
भवन्ति हृत्कर्णरसायणाः कथाः ।
तज्जोषणादाश्चपवर्गवर्त्मनि
श्रद्धा रतिर्भक्तिरनुक्रमिष्यति ॥

Because of that *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa disappears.¹¹

The natural inclination towards the thread-free Lord or towards *bhakti* for him in the form of service and so forth is unable to appear. Therefore, in the thread-bound condition allowances are made in all the scriptures for enjoyment and liberation, that is, the “four classes” centering around piety, wealth, sense enjoyment, and liberation, so that one might gain the greatest benefit possible in accordance with the threads. For that a natural, thread-bound faith is useful for people in general.

Now, let’s briefly consider this subject a bit more. In the material world generally speaking the “four classes,” also known as the “four goals of human life” (*puruṣārthas*), are piety, wealth, and sensual pleasure within the category of enjoyment and, beyond those, liberation. They are all related to the material threads. At the root of all the actions of living beings is a faith born of their natures. By the translucent and the opaque faiths, according to their natures, an interest in enjoyment arises and by the transparent or illumined faith an interest in liberation arises. But, *bhakti* is essentially thread-free. In a living being touched by the threads, because of the absence of thread-free faith connected with the Lord, an interest in or inclination towards thread-free behavior connected with the Lord or pure *bhakti* does not arise.

In the *Gītā* this is said with respect to the inclination towards material or thread-bound things arising from thread-induced faith:

The transparent or illumined worship the gods, the translucent worship supernatural spirits [*yakṣas* and

¹¹Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Cc), 1.1.50:

*ajñānatamer nāma kahi ye kaitava
dharma, artha, kāma, mokṣa-vāñchā ei sava
tār madhye mokṣa-vāñchā kaitava pradhāna
yāhā haite Kṛṣṇabhakti haya antardhāna*

rakṣas, semi-divine beings] and the others, the opaque or unilluminated people, worship the dead, the ghosts.¹²

Though the faiths of the three threads is discussed in this place in the *Gītā*, thread-free faith is not mentioned. The thread-free faith in the form of service to the Lord has been discussed in the previously cited verse from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (3.25.24).

Now the thing to know is that in order for the practices like rites, knowledge, *yoga*, and penance and so forth, which are born out of thread-induced faiths, to succeed, connection with *bhakti* is completely necessary. For this reason the *bhakti* that is connected with the performance of all those thread-bound practices so that they are brought to life and made successful is known by the name “threaded *bhakti*” (*saguṇa-bhakti*). That *bhakti* that is pure, free of the intention of achieving one’s own happiness, and has the sole objective of serving the Lord free of desire is known as thread-free *bhakti* (*nirguṇa-bhakti*). Śrī Rūpa in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* has described it in this way:

All efforts or engagements of the body, mind and speech for Kṛṣṇa if they are not antagonistic but completely favorable [towards him] are called *bhakti*. And if that *bhakti* is not clouded by any other sort of desire or the quest for knowledge or ritual success or something like that, and is completely unmixed then it is called the highest *bhakti*.¹³

¹²Bg., 17.4:

यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान् यत्तद्व्रांसि राजसाः ।
प्रेतान् भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥

¹³Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (Brs)., 1.1.11:

अन्याभिलाषिताशून्यं ज्ञानकर्माद्यनावृतं ।
आनुकूल्येन कृष्णानुशीलनं भक्तिरुत्तमा ॥

When this supreme or pure *bhakti* arises, not even the slightest desire for any thing else awakens in the devotee's heart except for the desire to meet the Lord in order to serve him.

That a connection with and the assistance of *bhakti* is necessary for the success and invigoration of all the other forms of practice is understood from the scriptures:

As all living beings thrive in the shelter of their mothers, so do the successes (*siddhi*) thrive by connecting themselves with *bhakti*.¹⁴

Therefore the author of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* has revealed that same idea in his book in many places:

Without *bhakti* no practice is able to produce any result
All results bestows *bhakti*, independent and powerful.¹⁵

“Rituals, *yoga*, and knowledge look to the face of *bhakti*.” Therefore, if any performance of the four classes [of human activity] is done without *bhakti*, it will not produce results. For this there is much evidence in the scriptures. Though *bhakti* is manifested in both forms, thread-bound and unthreaded, in actuality they are both the same *bhakti*. It is just like a mother who has two conditions, one as a servant of Kṛṣṇa and the other as the protector of her children. The servant of Kṛṣṇa form is her bright and shining,

¹⁴Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, 11.569:

जीवन्ति जन्तवः सर्वे यथा मातरमाश्रिताः ।
तथा भक्तिं समाश्रित्य सर्वा जीवन्ति सिद्धयः ॥

¹⁵Cc., 2.24.65:

bhakti vinā kono sādhana dite nāre phala
sarba phala dey bhakti svatantra prabala

pure condition. And again in the process of caring for her children her caring for them requires her to do unclean things sometimes and thus she is seen in an impure form through contact with the impure. In that way too even *bhakti*, though by nature pure, appears as unthreaded or threaded because of being pure or impure in accordance with whether the intention of its possessor is “for Kṛṣṇa” or “for myself.” When connected with the threads it does not bring about the appearance of its main result which is unthreaded *preman-bhakti*. Rather, being by nature like a desire-fulfilling tree, in its threaded form it joins itself with the various means and practices to achieve the desires of the living beings such as enjoyment, liberation, and the supernatural powers and thus only bestows its secondary results — it invigorates those various means or practices.

On the other hand, if that unthreaded source of faith in the Lord, self-manifesting *bhakti* or *Bhāgavata-dharma* (the characteristic trait of a lover of Bhagavān, the Lord) is not infused into the living being itself by its own grace through the medium of association with unmotivated great ones, then it cannot be attained even with the thousands of practices like rituals, knowledge and so forth that are touched by the threads. Therefore, that most beneficial *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, which beyond all human effort, is very rarely attained.

Through the path of knowledge liberation is easily attained and enjoyments like heaven and so forth through sacrifices and other pious acts. But this [self-revealing] *bhakti* to Hari is very hard to attain even with thousands of that sort of threaded practices.¹⁶

Therefore it has been determined that the main result of *bhakti*

¹⁶Brs., 1.1.36:

ज्ञानतः सुलभा मुक्तिर्भुक्तिर्यज्ञादिपुण्यतः ।
सेयं साधनसाहस्रैर्हरिभक्तिः सुदुर्लभा ॥

to the Lord is the appearance of love for the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and its secondary or subsidiary result is success in the four classes (*caturvarga*) of human endeavor. This is known from the scriptures:

Whatever results are attainable through sacrificial rites, penance, knowledge, renunciation, the eightfold *yoga* system, charity, and even other beneficial practices my *bhakta* quickly attains through *bhakti* to me, even heaven, liberation, and my own abode, if somehow, though my *bhakta* does not desire them, he has even a little desire for them because they may be favorable to his worship [of me].¹⁷

This unthreaded or pure *bhakti* is also known as perfected by nature, the highest, singular, unmixed, unadulterated, and so forth. There is only one way for it to be planted in the heart of a living being — the finest association with and mercy of the great *bhaktas*, that is, of the saintly ones, and of the discussions of Hari that arise from that. That sort of association is called “uncaused” (*ahaituka*) which is to say that it is not attained as a result of one’s own ability, wealth, or efforts.

Some people through some special good fortune attained by chance or, in other words, by association with and the grace of a *bhakta* of the Lord, have developed faith in discussions of the Lord’s names, qualities, forms, and sports and are not overly detached

¹⁷Bhāg., 11.20.32-33:

यत्कर्मभिर्यत्तपसा ज्ञानवैराद्यतश्च यत् ।
योगेन दानधर्मेण श्रेयोभिरित्तरैरपि ॥
सर्वं मद्भक्तियोगेन मद्भक्तो लभतेऽञ्जसा ।
स्वर्गापवर्गं मद्दाम कथञ्चिद्यदि वाञ्छति ॥

from rituals and their results, thinking them illusory like those desiring liberation, nor are they, on the other hand, overly attached to them like those who desire enjoyment from them. For such people *bhakti* brings about success [that is, it bestows love (*preman*)].¹⁸

One can supply an example here. It is like how in the ordinary world one can acquire, in exchange for an adequate amount of money, silver, gold, ordinary jewels and precious stones at a shop. But one cannot acquire the truly rare jewels like the Kaushtubha, Syamantaka, or Kohinor there. Even if one can pay an adequate amount of money, those rare jewels cannot be bought. Those priceless gems are things rightfully enjoyed by emperors and kings of kings. Only through such an emperor's dear friends and by their grace is one able to acquire those kinds of jewels. Pure *bhakti* is like a great jewel, too. Apart from the compassion of one of the Lord's dear friends there is no other way to obtain that jewel.

The difference between *bhakti* in its threaded and unthreaded forms can be understood from Kapila's teachings to his mother Devahūti. First he talks about threaded *bhakti*:

Bhakti-yoga is recognized to be of many types by its different paths, noble lady. Its state is variegated by the manner of the threads and nature of the human beings [who practice it].¹⁹

¹⁸Bhāg., 11.20.8:

यदृच्छया मत्कथादौ जातश्रद्धस्तु यः पुमान् ।
न निर्विषो नातिसक्तो भक्तियोगोऽस्य सिद्धिदः ॥

The phrase *yadr̥cchayā*, "by chance," in this verse is glossed by "somehow by the appearance of some good fortune born of the completely independent grace of and association with a *bhakta* of the Lord," केनापि परमस्वतन्त्रभगवद्भक्तसङ्गतत्कृपाजातमङ्गलोदयेन, in the *Bhakti-sandarbha* of Śrī Jīva.

¹⁹Bhāg., 3.29.7:

Then thread-free *bhakti* is described. Just like pure stream of the Gaṅgā, the purifier of the fallen, arising from its source in Gokukhī flows down in a thousand streams and purifies everything and everyone who touches it, so do the streams of pure *bhakti*, originating from the eternal companions of the Lord in his eternal abode, appear in this universe produced by Māyā through the lineal successions of the great ones and infuse the hearts of living beings with pure *bhakti* whose root is faith connected with the Lord.

Just as the Gaṅgā flows in streams of pure water without ceasation down to the sea, the mind moves, by the mere hearing of my qualities, without interruption, to me who am in the hearts of all. That is the definition put forward of thread-free *bhakti-yoga*, *bhakti* for the Supreme Person which is not shrouded by knowledge, rituals and so forth and which is not performed for any other purpose.²⁰

The definition of the highest *bhakti* that is given in the *Nārada-pañcarātra* is not in any way different from the definition of pure or the highest *bhakti* described by Rūpa Gosvāmin in his verse beginning *anyābhilāsītāśūnyam*. For instance:

That service of Hṛṣīkeśa (Kṛṣṇa) by means of the senses that is free of all qualifications [free of all desires for

भक्तियोगो बहुविधो मार्गैर्भाविनि भाव्यते ।
स्वभावगुणामार्गेण पुंसां भावो विभिद्यते ॥

²⁰Bhāg., 3.29.11-12:

मद्गुणश्रुतिमात्रेण मयि सर्वगुहाशये ।
मनोगतिरविच्छिन्ना यथा गङ्गाम्भसोऽम्बुधौ ॥
लक्षणं भक्तियोगस्य निर्गुणस्य ह्युदाहृतम् ।
अहैतुक्यव्यवहिता या भक्तिः पुरुषोत्तमे ॥

enjoyment in this world and the next] and that, being linked only with the desire to please Kṛṣṇa alone, is pure [unshrouded by knowledge, rites, and so forth], is the highest *bhakti*.²¹

Therefore, that highest *bhakti* or pure *bhakti* which is the very core of the consciousness power (*saṁvit*) intimately united with the core of the pleasure power within the essential powers (*svarūpa-śakti*)²² cannot be any part of this deadened world of Māyā. That self-revealing *dharma* of the Lord in the form of waves of *bhakti*, in order to enlarge the ultimate good fortune of living beings, who are bound beginninglessly to this world, flows in one stream from Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Brahmā, from Brahmā to Nārada and from Nārada to Vyāsa, Śuka and so forth, and also in another stream in the lineage from Saṅkarṣaṇa to the Catuḥsana, to Sāṅkhyāyana, Parāśara, Maitreya, Vidura and so forth. Then, both streams uniting into one in Śuka's words and gushing up like a fountain of the highest nectar in the presence of thousands and thousands of seers, brāhmaṇa-seers, king-seers, great seers, god-seers, and seers of Brahman in the assembly occasioned by King Parīkṣit's sitting down in his fast unto death, it ceaselessly flows in this phenomenal world through channels in the form of the successions of pure *bhakti*. The simultaneous conjunction of these two causes — the most elevated contact with the successions in the form of unmotivated association with the great ones (1) and hearing discussions of Hari, like streams of the Gaṅgā, from the mouths of those saintly ones (2) — infuses pure *bhakti* into the hearts of living beings. This subject

²¹Nārada-pañcarātra cited at Brs, 1.1.11-12:

सर्वोपाधिनिर्मुक्तं तत्परत्वेन निर्मलं ।
हृषीकेण हृषीकेशसेवनं भक्तिरुत्तमा ॥

²²The phrase that defines *bhakti* in the Caitanya tradition is: *hlādinī-sāra-samaveta-saṁvit-sāra-rūpā*, “the essence or core of consciousness [power] united with the essence or core of pleasure [power].” See Baladeva, for instance, *Siddhānta-ratna*, para. 38. [Trans.]

was mentioned previously in the verse beginning *satām prasāṅgān mama vīryasaṃvidah.*

The living being is beginninglessly turned away from Hari and struck low by Māyā through the beguilement of ignorance, has forgotten its true self-nature and confuses itself with the lumpen body. As a result of that, it becomes blinded by illusions in the form of the subtle traces or residual desires (*vāsanā*) for material objects. Therefore, when the living being is in that state of identification with matter, its own essential and innate condition as a servant of Kṛṣṇa is not revealed. Just as at the touch of the morning's rays of light in the form of contact with the great ones, a lotus flower gradually begins to blossom in the light of day, so does the lotus of the living being's heart, in which, after the beginningless darkness of ignorance is destroyed, a sense of being a servant of Kṛṣṇa or of being turned toward Kṛṣṇa awakens. It is said: *matsmṛtiḥ sādhu-sevayā*,²³ "from contact with and service of the saintly, a living being's recollection of Kṛṣṇa, lost for an eternity, is awakened." In this way a living being who has turned towards Kṛṣṇa is transformed into a pure living being. In that state, pure *bhakti* in the form of stories of Kṛṣṇa arising from contact with the great is passed into the pure heart of the living being and finally, like nectar suffusing a lotus flower, the heart of the living being is infused with the honey of divine love (*preman*), which is the only thing enjoyed by that bumblebee Kṛṣṇa.

A small pot that is upside down in a rainstorm is at first, by the force of the rain, turned rightside up and then along with that is filled by the rain showers. But when water falls on the pot in its upside down condition, though the dirt on its outside is surely cleansed away, it is not filled with water. In a similar way when one has contact with stories about Kṛṣṇa in some other fashion, not through contact with the saintly, the exterior impurities of the heart are indeed removed. But one only gets the secondary results of that in the form of the four groups [of goals, that is, of piety, wealth, sense enjoyment and liberation]. As a result

²³Bhāg., 11.11.45.

of contact with the saintly, however, like a pot being straightened up by the rain, the operations of the heart of the living being are changed from being beginninglessly turned away from the Lord to being turned towards the Lord and in the showers of pure *bhakti* in the form of stories about Kṛṣṇa from the mouths of the saintly, the vessel of the heart, starting with faith and so forth, becomes filled with the water of thread-free *bhakti*. The destruction of the border-line living being's identification with matter and the living being's becoming identified with the Lord's essential power (*svarūpa-śakti*) through pure *bhakti* is the benefit of all benefits — the highest attainment of all attainments. This can only occur from happenstance conjunction of two causes simultaneously — the instrumental cause of contact with the saintly and the material cause of stories about Kṛṣṇa [heard in that company].

Practically speaking apart from the conjunction of contact with the saintly and the *bhakti-yoga* of hearing and praising that comes from that, there is no other way to attain *bhakti*. I am the only shelter of the saintly.²⁴

²⁴Bhāg., 11.11.48:

प्रायेण भक्तियोगेन सत्सङ्गेन विनोद्धव ।
नोपायो विद्यते सम्यक्प्रायणं सतामहम् ॥

Chapter Two

“Association with the saintly is the source of the birth of *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa.”²⁵ By this statement, association with the saintly (*sādhusaṅga*) is said to be the root of birth of *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, it is first necessary to discuss to some degree the nature of the saintly or great ones, that is, to ascertain their essential defining characteristics.

Just as in the case of the knower, knowledge and the thing known, by the conjunction of those three with each other, each of the three is known. In the presence of one of them the presence of the other two is unavoidable. In the same way the *bhakta*, *bhakti*, and Bhagavān (the Lord) have an unbreakable connection with each other. Therefore, wherever the *bhakta* is, there is *bhakti* in the form of discussions about Hari. And wherever *bhakti* is, there Bhagavān is certain to be present too. Therefore, there is an inseparable connection between these three. These three are one and one is these three. And the co-existence of these three together is known in the world as Bhāgavata-dharma, the law of the Lord.

Though discussions of Hari or talks about the names, the forms, the qualities, and the sports of Bhagavān are not different from him, there is in a special sense a principle of eternal non-difference between the holy named and the holy name. It is like a chickpea inside its skin. Though from the outside with the skin on, it appears to be one, inside the skin the existence of two peas is well

²⁵Cc., 2.22.48.

known. In the same way in the covering of the skin of truth (*tattva*) the holy named and the holy name are non-different. Even so, freed from their covering they each exist separately. For the two peas in their skin there is no way to determine whose function it is to bud and so forth and thus those functions are perceived as simultaneously accomplished by both. In the same way the functions of endless creation and so forth are understood to be accomplished from both the natures of the holy named and holy name together.

Therefore, Brahman or Kṛṣṇa and the *praṇava* or the name of Kṛṣṇa that are mentioned in Śruti — the Named and the Name — to both of those is non-different agency assigned. Brahman and the conveyor of Brahman, the *praṇava* (*om*), since the two are principles that are not different from each other, what all of the Śruti say about Brahman in passages like: *sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma*,²⁶ “all this is Brahman,” they also say about the conveyor of Brahman in passages like *omitīdaṃ sarvaṃ*,²⁷ “om is all this,” and *omityetadakṣaramidaṃ sarvaṃ*,²⁸ “the syllable *om* is all this.” In relationship to this non-difference, an even clearer statement exists in Śruti:

This syllable [*om*]²⁹ is Brahman; this syllable is the highest. Knowing this syllable, whatever one desires one achieves.³⁰

The Brahman, or the principle of non-dual knowledge (*advaya-jñāna-tattve*), mentioned in Śruti is manifested in two ways: it is

²⁶Chānd. U., 3.14.1.

²⁷Tait. U., 1.7.

²⁸Māṇḍukya U., 1.

²⁹*akṣara*, also “imperishable.”

³⁰Kāthaka U., 2.16:

एतद्धोवाचरं ब्रह्म एतद्धोवाचरं परम् ।
एतद्धोवाचरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥

either with or without qualification. Brahman with qualification is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, covered over by indirect statement.³¹ Brahman without qualification is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's bodily glow. Therefore, he is the foundation or resting place of Brahman. In the *Gītā*, there is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's own statement on the matter: *brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham*, "I am the foundation or ground of Brahman without qualification."

Therefore, when Brahman, the subject of speech, and the speech that conveys it, the *praṇava* or *oṃkāra*, are said to be non-different, then too the subject of speech, the Named, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and the speech that conveys him, the Name of Kṛṣṇa or the holy name, should also be understood to be non-different. Bhagavān and the name of Bhagavān are non-different as has been made well-known in all scriptures. Take for instance the *Padma Purāṇa*: *abhinatvān nāma-nāmino*, "because of the non-difference of the Name and the Named." There is a detailed discussion of this subject in the first section of my *Nāma-cintāmaṇi* (Thought-jewel of the Holy Name).

Again, since Brahman is the unqualified manifestation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *praṇava* which conveys Brahman is the unqualified manifestation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name or, in another way to put it,] the *praṇava*'s qualified manifestation is the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the name of Bhagavān. This, too, is understood from the evidence of scripture. Just as from the *praṇava* manifestation of the creation and of the Vedas and such is said to arise, so too from the eighteen syllable mantra of Kṛṣṇa's names,³² the entire creation along with the Vedas and the rest are said to arise. In the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad* and other Śruti texts that is found in a more detailed manner.

Therefore from our deliberations on this subject so far this much can be established: when the three, *bhakta*, *bhakti*, and Bhagavān are found together in one place, then referring to it as "association with the saintly," one means the meeting together in one place of

³¹Śruti (*Gopāla-tāpanī* ?): कृष्णो ब्रह्मैव शाश्वतम्, "Kṛṣṇa is eternal Brahman itself."

³²The Gopāla-mantra.

the three: the *bhakta*, *bhakti*, and Bhagavān in his non-different nature as the holy name and the holy named. And the meaning of “talks of Hari” from the lips of a *bhakta* is talks about the names, forms, qualities, and sports of Hari. Moreover, since the names are mentioned first, the names are the understood to be the most important of them all, the very whole [of which the others are parts]. In addition, when the whole, the holy name, is present, its limbs or parts in the form the nine types of *bhakti*, headed by hearing, praising, and so forth, and *bhakti*’s result, divine love (*preman*), are also present along with it. This is the essential definition of “the great” [in the phrase “association with the great,” *mahat-saṅga*]. In other words, by contact with the “raiser of the dead” in the form of the grace of the “great” in the combination of all those elements, the finest spiritual nature is awakened in the living being suffering under *māyā*. When that happens, pure *bhakti*, as discussions of Hari from the mouths of the saintly, is infused into the heart of the purified living being. In the gradual arising of that unthreaded (*nirguṇa*) *bhakti*, it appears in mind’s states of unclean, clean, and fully clean as the *bhakti* of practice, the *bhakti* of feeling, and the *bhakti* of love. The living being (*jīva*) is transformed into a *bhakta* (devotee) and attaining immortality is made eternally fortunate. This begins by the conjunction of being turned back towards Kṛṣṇa and of hearing the holy names from the mouths of the saintly, both of which result directly from association with the saintly, and then, as a result of those, the nine forms of *bhakti*, beginning with hearing and praising, appear and divine love arises gradually through the stages of faith and so forth. Since the holy name which is non-different from the holy named is present with the saintly, the holy name is worthy of being considered a material cause of pure *bhakti*. Therefore, in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it is said: *sādhu-saṅga nāma vinā prema nāhi haya*:³³ “association with the saintly does not become divine love without the holy name.” In other words, association with the saintly is the instrumental cause of divine love and the holy name is the material cause.

³³Cc., ?

After this we have to discuss the “seed principle,” that is, the primary cause of the root of the birth of *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa. Just as the seed is the cause of the cause or the cause of the root of a tree, it is known from scripture that the Named and the Name, in essence non-different from each other, are simultaneously the seed of the root of the creation. Therefore the Named and the Name are seen being described as the seed principle in scripture. For instance [Kṛṣṇa says]:

Know me to be the eternal seed of all beings, son of Prthā.³⁴

Again, in reference to the holy name there is a statement: “seed of the tree of *dharma*.”³⁵ Or, in the *Caritāmṛta*: *kṛṣṇa-nāma bīja tāhe nā haya aṅkara*,³⁶ “the seed of the holy name in him has not sprouted,” and *bhakti-latā bīja*, “the seed of the vine of *bhakti*.”

In the statement from Śruti, *omitīdaṃ sarvaṃ*,³⁷ “the *om* is all this,” the indistinct name of Bhagavān is specified as the seed at the root of creation. Again in the *Brahma-saṃhitā*, in the verse *śabda-brahma-mayaṇi veṇuṃ vādayantaṃ mukhāmbuje*, “playing the flute made of sound-brahman with his lotus mouth ...,” the presence through the flute, before the creation of the world by Brahmā, of the holy name and the holy named, in their non-different essence, as the seed is established as is the agency of the holy name in the creation of that world. In the previously mentioned *Gopāla-tāpanī* Kṛṣṇa’s name in the form of the eighteen-syllable mantra is described as the seed of the entirety of the universe of rebirth or as the cause of all and thus the supremacy of the name of Kṛṣṇa which is not different from Kṛṣṇa in the causation of the creation

³⁴Bg, 7.10:

बीजं मां सर्वभूतानां विद्धि पार्थ सनातम् ।

³⁵*Padyāvalī*, 19: बीजं धर्मदुमस्य

³⁶Cc, 1.8.26.

³⁷Tait. U., 1.7.

is indicated. Not only is it the cause or seed of the universe; the supremacy of the name of Kṛṣṇa as the seed at the root of the creation from the *praṇava* of the *gāyātrī* and from the *gāyātrī* of the Vedas has been proclaimed in scripture. Though this requires a lengthy discussion, a little glimpse of this subject can be had from the following quote:

Praṇava, the great word, is an image of God.
From the *praṇava* arise all the Vedas and the world.³⁸

Therefore, from the seed of Kṛṣṇa's name, which is non-different from Kṛṣṇa, appears the entire universe along with the scriptures headed by the Vedas. Also, although association with the saintly is said to be the root of *bhakti*, the seed or first cause of that root is the presence of the holy name in the saintly person's heart and at the beginning of all discussions about Hari heard from the lips of saintly persons.

Thus, this much is known from the essential definition of the saintly or the great person, that through associating with the saintly it is possible to attain the simultaneously association with the *bhakta*, with *bhakti*, and with the Lord (in the indistinguishable forms of Name and Named) all together. Moreover, from the secondary definition, or the definition based on a knowledge of the effects of a thing, it is known that from the discussion of and hearing about the names, forms, qualities, and sports of Hari through the words of the saintly ones pure *bhakti* is infused into the hearts of the living beings.

"The living being's true identity is eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa."³⁹ In accordance with this statement of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* being a servant of Kṛṣṇa is the living being's eternal state of being, which, though eternally remaining in the hearts of living beings

³⁸Cc., 2.6.158:

*praṇava se mahā-vākya īśvarer mūrti
praṇava haite sarva-veda jagater utpatti*

³⁹Cc, ?

deluded by *māyā* is not capable of manifestation because of their being beginninglessly turned away from the him. By the influence of the association of the saintly the state of turning towards Kṛṣṇa arises. When that happens the backward conditions produced by ignorance: being an enjoyer (I am the enjoyer), being the agent (I am the doer), and being the master (I am the master) are erased from the hearts of the living beings and the pure awareness, “I am the servant of Kṛṣṇa, not of anyone else,”⁴⁰ arises. This is called being turned towards Kṛṣṇa. This is the living being’s eternal, essential nature. From the association and grace of the great ones that long dormant state of being a servant of Kṛṣṇa is awakened. But, the appearance of pure *bhakti* in the heart of the living being is not part of its essential nature. That attribute is infused from contact with narratives about Hari received from the mouths of the great ones. Since pure *bhakti* which is a function of the essential or internal power (*svarūpa-śakti*) is not able to reside by itself in the living being who is part of the marginal power (*taṭastha-śakti*), the living being is not described as the eternal “*bhakta*” of Kṛṣṇa but as the eternal “servant” of Kṛṣṇa. Only when one’s fullest sense of being a servant of Kṛṣṇa arises, can one along with that become a *bhakta* of Kṛṣṇa, too. Since apart from that, or without the grace and association of the great ones, the conceits of being an agent either as a ritualist (*karmī*), a cultivator of knowledge (*jñānī*), or a practitioner of yoga (*yogī*) remain in all other living beings, the condition of being an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa is not perceived.

In a living being who is a religious aspirant in whom pure *bhakti* has been infused, the nine forms of *bhakti* as practice, beginning with hearing and repeating, are also infused and as their result the appearance of divine love occurs progressively through the stages of faith and so forth. Therefore, for the saintly one the repeating is of primary importance and for the aspirant the hearing of that is of primary importance. And again within the hearing and repeating the holy name is the most important of all.

Therefore, the tremendous greatness of repeating the holy names

⁴⁰*Padma Purāna*, 60.90: दासभूतो हरेरेव नान्यस्यैव कदाचन

(*nāma-saṅkīrtana*) which is the seed of all is clearly praised in the *Bhāgavata*:

For embodied beings who are rotating around [on the wheel of material existence] there is no higher gain, since from this [loud repetition of the holy names] one attains the highest peace and the cycle of repeated birth and death is destroyed.⁴¹

Now we will consider the external definition (*taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*) or the influence or power of association with the great ones. The eternal definition is knowledge by means of the effects of something. By means of the effects the great *bhaktas* or saintly ones have, their unsurpassed greatness or power is known.

That all sacred rivers like the Ganges and so forth and sacred sites like Kurukṣetra, Kāśī, Puṣkara, and so forth are able to destroy the sins of selfish living beings, help them gather merit, and bestow on them the four classes or human objectives even upto bringing them liberation is well known. But in the process of destroying sins and bestowing merit and the four objectives, they themselves become polluted and desecrated by accepting pollutions left behind by the pilgrims. In that condition, on the arrival of saintly *bhaktas* and by the power of their touch the pollutions are removed and all of the holy places again become sacred. As a result of that they are able to become purifiers again. One can thoroughly understand this subject from the faithful statement of King Yudhiṣṭhira to the great spirited, Vidura.

Great *bhaktas* like you are themselves [as pure as] the holy places, lord. They make the sacred places sacred

⁴¹Bhāg., 11.5.38:

न ह्यतः परमो लाभो देहिनां भ्राम्यतामिह ।
यतो विन्देत परमां शान्तिं नश्यति संसृतिः ॥

through [the presence] within them of the lord who holds the club [Viṣṇu]. [They only go to them to make the holy places holy. Otherwise, they have no need to wander around to the holy places.]⁴²

The meaning of the verse is: the *bhaktas* of the lord have no personal purpose to fulfill by wandering around to the holy places. Still they selflessly visit all the holy places which have become polluted by contact with materialistic, selfish people in order to purify them through the gift of their own purity. What greater statement can be made about the greatness of those saintly *bhaktas*?

Moreover, since arrival of the saintly in order to obtain purification is very rare, the rivers with pious waters like the Gaṅgā and so forth and the auspicious holy places like Puṣkara and so forth themselves go to where the nectar-like discussions of Hari flow from the lips of the saintly. As it is said:

There do the Gaṅgā, Yamunā, the Confluence, the Godāvarī, Sindhu, and Sarasvatī as well as the meritorious holy sites reside where there are magnificent discussions about Acyuta.⁴³

Now here one may wish to ask: “How is it possible for all of the rivers like the Gaṅgā and all of the holy places such as Kurukṣetra to come into a limited and small place like those where

⁴²Bhāg., 1.13.10:

भवद्विधा भागवतस्तीर्थभूताः स्वयं विभो ।
तीर्थीकुर्वन्ति तीर्थानि स्वान्तःस्थेन गदाभृता ॥

⁴³?:

तत्रैव गङ्गा यमुना च वेणी गोदावरी सिन्धुसरस्वतीश्च ।
पुरयानि तीर्थानि वसन्ति तत्र यत्राच्युतोदारकथाप्रसङ्गः ॥

the discussions of Hari are flowing from the mouths of the saintly? And why is that not seen by others?" In reply it must be said that all of the rivers and holy places do not go to places where discussions of Hari are taking place in their bodies. They come in the form of the overseeing spirits [of those rivers and places] and by the influence of their invisibility powers they are not visible to ordinary sight. The invisibility powers of even the demi-gods is well known in scripture.

From our previous discussion it has been established that discussions of Hari from the lips of the saintly, that is, discussions of Hari's names, forms, qualities, and sports, are non-different from Hari. Nevertheless, since they are especially germane, we shall now discuss in greater detail only the lack of difference between the holy named and the holy name. It is said:

[The Lord himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, says to Nārada:] I do not live in Vaikuṅṭha nor in the hearts of the yogīs. Wherever my *bhaktas* sing, there I am present, Nārada.⁴⁴

The intended meaning of this verse is: Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Person himself. He does not reside in his own form in Vaikuṅṭha. His expansions and partial forms reside there. He also does not appear in the hearts of the yogīs because in the hearts of all living beings is the residence of his partial form, the Paramātman. That is understood from his statement in the *Gītā*:

I am the *ātman* situated in the hearts of all beings, Guḍākeśa.⁴⁵

⁴⁴*Padma Purāna*:

नाहं वसामि वैकुण्ठे योगिनां हृदये न च ।
मद्भक्ता यत्र गायन्ति तत्र तिष्ठामि नारद ॥

⁴⁵*Bhagavad-gītā*, 10.20:

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

Even though Bhagavān resides in the form of his partial manifestation, the Paramātman, in the hearts of all living beings, that is not visible to ordinary living beings who face outwards. Yogīs who practice the eight-limbed yoga are able to see him as their object of worship. As it is said:

Some remember through concentration the person (*puruṣa*), measuring only the span between the thumb and forefinger, sitting in the space of their hearts in their own bodies. He has four arms holding a lotus, a discus, a conch shell, and a club.⁴⁶

But from the previous statement: “wherever my *bhaktas* sing, there I am present, Nārada,” it is made known that he is present in his own form where his names are being sung by his *bhaktas* with *bhakti*. Since the named and the name are a non-different principle, there is no mention of his being present in his partial Paramātman form. Moreover, he is not present there to attain purification by destroying his own impurities like the presiding spirits of the holy places mentioned before. Because, in him who is Bhagavān himself, full of the six opulences, faults like pollution and so forth cannot exist even in the least degree. Therefore, there is no question of his having to rid himself of pollution. Since the named and the name are not different, wherever the name is, the named in his own form should also be understood to be present. Also from the statement of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: “Kṛṣṇa’s resting place is always in the heart of the *bhakta*,”⁴⁷ it is understood he is not only in the mouth of the *bhakta* in the form of discussions of Hari. In the heart of the *bhakta* Kṛṣṇa always experiences the happiness of repose—in his own form.

⁴⁶*Bhāg.*, 2.2.8:

केचित् स्वदेहान्तर्हृदयावकाशे प्रादेशमात्रं पुरुषं वसन्तम् ।
चतुर्भुजं कञ्जरथाङ्गशङ्खगदाधरं धारणया स्मरन्ति ॥

⁴⁷*Cc.*, ?

One in whose heart flows a bubbling stream of *bhakti* in the form of discussions of Hari, whose heart-temple is pure, free of the dust and smoke of inclinations for the objects of the senses, and in whose heart, since it is free of all the hullabaloo of self interest and completely absent of desire, it is silent, quiet, and solitary and apart from being for Kṛṣṇa alone, there is not even a speck of self consideration, such a pure, cool, peaceful *bhakta's* heart-temple is a place suitable for Kṛṣṇa's repose. Repose does not mean sleep. It means the experience of happiness alone without any effort or strain. The hearts of ritualists, pursuers of knowledge, and yogins are not places of repose for him. In place of his [Kṛṣṇa's] interest exists selfishness or self interest in the form of desire for sense enjoyment, liberation, and the supernatural accomplishments (*siddhis*). In his form as the witness-superself (*sākṣī-paramātmān*), when he resides in the hearts of all living beings, though himself unaffected, he has to perceive all their auspicious and inauspicious unconscious trace-desire resulting from their past actions and their experience of the results of that. As it says in the *Gītā*:

Because of being beginningless and without [material] thread, this superself is imperishable. Though situated in the body, Kaunteya, he does nothing and is not affected.⁴⁸

In the hearts of desire-filled living beings, which are always full of the bad odors of sensual impressions and a cacophony of screams for self-interest whether it be for liberation in the case of those who pursue knowledge or for supernatural powers in the case of yogins or for something else, he [the Lord] cannot find repose in his form as the unaffected, beginningless, thread-less superself. Therefore, for the pleasure of uninterrupted repose, Śrī

⁴⁸*Bhagavad-gītā*, 13.31:

अनादित्वान्निर्गुणात्वात्परमात्माऽहमव्ययः ।
शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते ॥

Kṛṣṇa has chosen the heart-temple of the *bhakta* who is pure because of being free from the subconscious impressions of desire and because of having rejected all forms of self interest for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa and whose heart is clean, supremely beautiful, and secluded. Not only that, in the way that two *vīṇās*, matching each other string by string, produce one melody—reveal a harmony, the heart strings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa becomes harmonious with the heart strings of his devotee and in both hearts one melody is sounded. He has said this with his own lips:

The saintly are the heart for me and of the saintly I am the heart. They know nothing other than me nor do I know anything other than them in the least.⁴⁹

When there is oneness in the hearts of the devotee and Bhagavān in this way, through the harmony of the melodies in each of their hearts, their hearts develop a oneness of intention. But, because of the foul odor of sensual inclinations in the hearts of ritualists, pursuers of knowledge, and yogins and the cacophony of their being intent on achieving their own other purposes, not only is there no question of their reaching a oneness of heart with him, their hearts are unfit to be places of repose for Bhagavān. One can understand from his own words that apart from *bhakti* Bhagavān cannot be attained directly by any other means such as rites, yoga, knowledge, and so forth:

Uddhava, yoga does not achieve me, nor does Sāṅkhya, nor Dharma, nor study of the Veda, nor austerity, nor renunciation the way that *bhakti*, strengthened in me, does.⁵⁰

⁴⁹*Bhāg.*, 9.4.68:

साधवो हृदयं मह्यं साधूनां हृदयस्त्वहम् ।
मदन्यत्ते न जानन्ति नाहं तेभ्यो मनागपि ॥

⁵⁰*Bhāg.*, 11.14.20:

In relationship to the cause for this it is therefore said in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

Kṛṣṇa's *bhakta* is desireless
and therefore is at peace.
Wishers for enjoyment, liberation, and siddhis
are all lacking in peace.⁵¹

न साधयति मां योगो न साङ्गं धर्म उद्धव ।
न स्वाध्यायस्तपस्त्यागो यथा भक्तिर्ममोज्ज्वला ॥

⁵¹Cc., 2.9.132:

kṛṣṇabhakta niṣkāma ātma śānta
bhukti-mukti-siddhikāmī sakalī aśānta

Chapter Three

According to the hierarchy of *bhaktas'* longing to serve Kṛṣṇa, the limit of excellence reaches its highest point in Śrī Rādhikā. Therefore, the highest limit of the happiness of Bhagavān's repose is also found in the heart of Śrī Rādhikā, the great queen of *bhakti* whose very essence is *mahābhāva*.⁵² Rādhikā's heart is full of the experience of only the happiness of serving Kṛṣṇa. In her case there is no independent experience of any happiness. In her heart, in the condition of intense relishing of the joy of serving Kṛṣṇa that relishing becomes expanded and when that internal experience boils over and manifests externally in hundreds and thousands of streams then that one Rādhārāṇī takes the forms of millions of cowherd girls and gives Śrī Hari, who sports in the bower of the heart, the happiness of repose. Externally, too, she creates unlimited bowers for that purpose. This is the bower-service of the cowherd girls of Vraja and Kuṅjavihārī's [Kṛṣṇa's] love-sports in secluded bowers. Just as it always shines in the hearts of the devotees, so is it also always performed externally as well. It never ceases in either place [in the hearts or externally] at any time. One drop from that ocean of the experience of service bursting forth, overflowing in a thousand streams and inundating the heart of the *bhakta* is found the following words of a *bhakta*:

I feel as if my heart, bobbing in a river, is spread wide

⁵²The great emotion.

and on it golden Gaurāṅga dances.⁵³

Nothing can be greater in excellence than a saintly *bhakta* of Hari in whose heart is the permanent abode of Bhagavān's repose and who has become thoroughly identified, as it were, with both *bhakti* and Bhagavān. And among them again there is no limit to the greatness of those who are wholeheartedly sheltered in Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, in the scriptures, the superiority of the *bhakta* or Vaiṣṇava over the ritualist, the pursuer of knowledge, the yogin and so forth is proclaimed. And among the *bhaktas* the superiority of the wholehearted ones is acclaimed in particular. Take for instance:

Better than thousands of performers of sacrificial rites is one who has mastered all the Vedānta and better than millions of masters of Vedānta is one *bhakta* of Viṣṇu. Out of thousands of Vaiṣṇavas one who is wholehearted is superior. Those persons who are wholehearted go to the highest abode.⁵⁴

In this way, out of a thousand *bhaktas* one who is single-purposed (*ekānta*) [or wholehearted] is established as the best of all in the *Gītā*, the Lord's own words. Pointing to himself he said: "one who thinks of me alone." By this statement the superiority of the wholehearted *bhakta* of Kṛṣṇa is confirmed. For instance:

⁵³?

mane kari nade juṛi hṛday vichāi
tāhār upare sonār gaurāṅga nācāi

⁵⁴ *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, cited in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* at 10.117:

सत्रयाजिसहस्रेभः सर्ववेदान्तपारगः ।
सर्ववेदान्तवित्कोट्या विष्णुभक्तो विशिष्यते ॥
वैष्णवानां सहस्रेभ्य एकान्त्येको विशिष्यते ।
एकान्तिनस्तु पुरुषा गच्छन्ति परमं पदं ॥

The yogin is considered greater than performers of austerity and greater than possessors of knowledge, too. The yogin is greater than ritualists as well. Therefore, become a yogin, Arjuna. Among all the yogins, the one who worships me with faith, his heart having flown to me, is in my opinion the best.⁵⁵

In this verse *mad-gatena* means “in me”—in Śrī Kṛṣṇa—and *antarātmanā* means “with the whole mind.” Together they mean “attached to me in all respects.” By this, it is established that those whose minds or hearts are “made of Kṛṣṇa” (*kṛṣṇa-maya*), they are the wholehearted or single-purposed *bhaktas*.

In another place in the *Gītā*, it is also found stated in this way:

Those who fix their minds in me and being constantly connected worship me, they possessing the highest faith I consider the highest yogins.⁵⁶

Single-minded *bhakta*-saints are “made of Hari” and Hari, too, becomes made of those kinds of *bhaktas* and enjoys the pleasure of repose in their hearts. The *bhaktas*, too, do not care for any pleasure for themselves other than the pleasure of perceiving the pleasure of the Lord. In the hearts of both, there is but one life; that is the meaning here. In this kind of situation the experiences

⁵⁵*Bhagavad-gītā*, 6.46-7:

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोऽधिकः ।
कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवाजुन ॥
योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।
अद्भवान् भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः ॥

⁵⁶*ibid.*, 12.2:

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।
अद्भया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥

in the hearts of Hari-made *bhaktas* are echoed in the heart of the Lord and the experiences in the heart of the Lord are echoed in the hearts of the *bhaktas*.

The meaning of the previously cited verse: “The saintly are my heart and I am the heart of the saintly,” is that the *bhakta* and the Lord share but one life. We are also able to understand this clearly in the following verse in the Lord’s own words:

I am equal towards all living beings; I have neither enemy nor favorite. But those who worship me with *bhakti*, they are in me and I am in them.⁵⁷

Śrī Bhagavān, who is the resting place of the delight-power, though by nature pleasure himself enjoys pleasure and causes his *bhaktas* to enjoy pleasure by means of his delight-power. As it is said:

Though Bhagavān is the very form of delighting, that by which he delights and causes delight is the delight-power. (*hlādinī*).⁵⁸

This delight when it resides in Bhagavān is called “power” (*śakti*) and when it is in the *bhakta* it is called *bhakti*. By *bhakti* we generally mean being fond of or loving the Lord and by *bhakta* we mean the one who has fondness or love. When the *bhakti* in the heart of the *bhakta* makes the Lord its object or becomes focused on him, it goes to him and touches him and then the Lord’s delight appears. That pleasure of the Lord comes back to the *bhakta*

⁵⁷ibid., 9.29:

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।
ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥

⁵⁸Śrī Jīva, *Bhagavat-sandarbhā*, para. 117: ह्लादकरूपोऽपि भगवान् यया ह्लादते ह्लादयति च सा ह्लादिनी

and in turn gives her pleasure or bestows the joy of service on her. Just as by the soft touch of the evening breeze the budding tuberosse blossoms and rubs its own sweet aroma on the breast of the breeze, and then the breeze turns around and returns carrying that fragrance in its heart, so, being touched by the *bhakti* in the heart of the *bhakta*, the sleeping delight in Bhagavān is awakened and gives him (Bhagavān) pleasure. Then it returns carrying the pleasure of serving the Lord. By the touch of the fragrance of that pleasure the heart of the *bhakta* becomes filled to overflowing. Therefore, how can there be anything equal or superior to the magnificence of a great *bhakta* in whom the three: *bhakta*, *bhakti*, and Bhagavān have become united with each other and have reached a state of sharing one life with each other in their absorption in the experience of the each other's delight?

Previously I said that even places of pilgrimage become purified by contact with great *bhaktas*. Among all of the gods Brahmā and Rudra are the best. The might of the *bhaktas* and the devotees of the Lord is greater than even that of Brahmā and Rudra. This is proved by what the king of the gods, Indra himself, said:

In the Age of Kali, the rare name "*bhāgavata*" [devotee of the Lord] is not attained.⁵⁹ It is higher than the

⁵⁹ Apart from the present Age of Kali in which Gaura has appeared, in all the other Kalis even the names "*bhāgavata*" and "*bhakta*" are very rare. Therefore, saying that *bhaktas* themselves are rare is unnecessary. The reason is that even though the Holy Name is the religious observation for all Kali-yugas, the humans in all those ordinary Kali-yugas are not inclined to take to it. "The people in Kali will not honor that" (Bhāg., 12.3.44: यक्ष्यन्ति न तत्कलौ जनाः). For this reason, since they are without religious cultivation, *bhaktas* and association with the saintly are rare. But, on the subject of the present Age of Kali in which Gaura has appeared, an independent characterization is found in scripture. In this Age of Kali it is said that many people will become devotees of Nārāyaṇa or *bhaktas* of Hari. "In Kali, indeed, there will be many devoted to Nārāyaṇa" (Bhāg., 11.5.38: कलौ खलु भविष्यन्ति नारायणपरायणाः)

Moreover, in this Kali, the age's religious observance of repetition of the Holy Name is willingly accepted by all people. This is by the grace of the Lord. Therefore, even though there is no shortage of saintly *bhaktas* in the present condition

estate of Brahmā and Rudra. This my guru told me.⁶⁰

Therefore, what joy in the worlds of humans and gods can be compared with the greatness of association with the great *bhaktas*? Even the joys of liberation or of heaven cannot be compared with a small particle of their greatness. As it is said:

We cannot compare even the briefest association of the companions of the Lord with going to heaven or even not being reborn again. What more [need be said about the possibility of comparing it] with the desired objectives of mortals?⁶¹

As a result of visiting the holy places and worshipping the gods one attains heaven and liberation. When that attainment of heaven and liberation cannot be compared to even the briefest association with the saintly then to what can the greatness of association with the saintly be compared? The greatness of *bhakti*,

of Kali, because of an abundance of Kali-instigated offenses to the Holy Name, *bhakti* is seen at present to arise in very few cases. This is due to the Holy Name's displeasure.

In this age, since the Holy Name is accepted and since, provided offenses to the Holy Name do not persist, there is a good opportunity for the appearance of the the highest form of love of all, the people of the Satya-yuga and the other ages beg to be born in this special Kali-yuga in which Gaura appeared. This also is understood from a verse of the *Bhāgavata*: "O King, the living beings born in the Kṛta and the others ages wish to be born in Kali" (Bhāg., 11.5.38: कृतादिषु प्रजा राजन् कलाविच्छन्ति सम्भवम्).

⁶⁰Cited in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, 10.65:

कलौ भागवतं नाम दुर्लभं नैव लभ्यते ।
ब्रह्मरुद्रपदोत्कृष्टं गुरुणा कथितं मम ।

⁶¹Bhāg., 1.18.13:

तुलयाम लवेनापि न स्वरं नापुनर्भवं ।
भगवत्सङ्गिसन्गस्य मर्त्यानां किमुताशिषः ॥

the *bhakta*, and Bhagavān is more than even Brahma-loka which is the highest plane of all. With what else can the highest reaches of the greatness of those three joined together in the person of the *bhakta* be compared? By its absense the great respectability of Brahma-loka becomes less than insignificant. That is revealed by the following verse:

A place where there are no streams of delight from stories about Vaikuṅṭha, no saintly *bhāgavatas* who are sheltered by him, and no great festivals celebrating that Lord of Sacrifice, even if it is the world of the chief of the gods [Brahmā], it is not fit to be inhabited.⁶²

Where can one find anything that can be compared with the greatness of association with great, saintly devotees who incorporate in themselves *bhakti*, Bhagavān, and *bhakta*, gathered together in unity? Only the greatness of Bhagavān himself remains shining above all else. A clear indication that Bhagavān choses that sort of *bhakta* as his own representative is understood from the following verse:

One who has mastered the four Vedas is not dear to me, but a dog-cooker who is my *bhakta* is dear to me. Things [meant to be offered to me] should be offered to him and [things that should be received from me] should be received from him and he is to be honored just like me.⁶³

⁶²Bhāg., 4.19.23:

न यत्र वैकुण्ठकथासुखापगा
न यत्र साधवो भागवतस्तदाश्रयाः ।
न यत्र यज्ञेशमखा महोत्सवाः
सुरेशलोकोऽपि न वै स सेव्यताम्

⁶³Hbv., 10.92:

Therefore, for those who are the representatives of Bhagavān, where will one find anything to equal their greatness? Thus, his own single-minded *bhaktas*, who are bound to him by their shared heart and shared life-breath, are dearest to him. Śrī Bhagavān, therefore, said with his own lips concerning Uddhava, one of the best of that sort of *bhakta*:

They are not as dear to me as you, [Uddhava,] not
Brahmā nor Śaṅkara nor Saṅkarṣaṇa nor Śrī nor even
myself.⁶⁴

How deep Bhagavān's pleasure is with his single-minded *bhaktas* can be understood from that forceful statement which bursts from the inner core of his heart. Therefore, it is not just a matter of representation or of being dear, Bhagavān's own subjugation by the *bhakta* is well-known topic, too.

That Bhagavān, though independent, is dependent on the *bhakta*, though the overlord of all is submissive to the *bhakta* and though self-manifesting his appearance depends only on the *bhakti* of the *bhakta*; this fact he himself reveals with great delight in his own words:

I am dependent on my *bhakta*, twice-born, as if I were
not independent at all. My heart is captured by my
saintly *bhaktas*. I am fond of my *bhaktas*. I do not want
myself without my saintly *bhaktas*, nor do I want un-
surpassed affluence without those for whom I am the

न मे प्रियश्चतुर्वेदी मद्भक्तः स्वपचः प्रियः ।
तस्मै देयं ततो ग्राह्यं स च पूज्यो यथा ह्यहम् ॥

⁶⁴Bhāg., 11.14.15:

न तथा मे प्रियतम आत्मयोनिर्न शङ्करः ।
न च सङ्कर्षणो न श्रीनैवात्मा च यथ भवान् ॥

highest goal. Those who give up their wives, homes, sons, elders, lives, this world and the next and seek shelter in me, how dare I reject them? Those saintly ones whose hearts are bound to me, who look upon all things as equal, bring me under their control through their *bhakti*, like a chaste wives do a chaste husband.⁶⁵

The tremendous, heart-filling force of the pleasure that the Lord of All experiences in being dependent on his *bhaktas* is proclaimed in the following verse:

Though ever liberated, I am bound to my *bhaktas* by the ropes of affection. Though unconquered, I am conquered by them; though uncontrollable I am controlled by them. For one who, having given up affection for friends and family, loves me, I am his one and only and he is mine; nor do we two have any other friend (*suhrt*).⁶⁶

⁶⁵Bhāg., 9.4.63-6:

अहं भक्ताधीनो ह्यस्वतन्त्र इव द्विज ।
 साधुभिर्ग्रंस्तहृदयो भक्तैर्भक्तजनप्रियः ॥
 नाहमात्मानमाशासे मद्भक्तैः साधुभिर्विना ।
 श्रियञ्चात्यन्तिकीं ब्रह्मन् येषां गतिरहं परा ॥
 ये दारागारपुत्राप्तप्राणान् वित्तमिमं परम् ।
 हित्वा मां शरणं याताः कथं तांस्त्यक्तुमुत्सहे ॥
 मयि निर्वद्धहृदयाः साधवः समदर्शनाः ।
 वशे कुर्वन्ति मां भक्त्वा सत्स्त्रियः सत्पतिं यथा ॥

⁶⁶*Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*, :

सदा मुक्तोऽपि बद्धोऽस्मि भक्तेषु स्नेहरज्जुभिः ।
 अजितोऽपि जितोऽहं तैरवश्योऽपि वशीकृतः ॥
 त्यक्तबन्धुजनस्नेहो मयि यः कुरुते रतिं ।
 एकस्तस्यास्मि स च मे न चान्योऽस्त्यावयोः सुहृद् ॥

The meaning of the word “friend” (*su-hṛt*) is “one whose heart is beautiful” or “a companion who is always in accord with one.” Therefore, the heart of the *bhakta* which is free of lust, free of impurities, peaceful, and dispassionate, is the only place of repose for Bhagavān.

Chapter Four

Though Bhagavān himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, reposing in the heart of the *bhakta*, as previously described, remains immersed in the experience of effortless happiness and though there there is none of the dust of desire and impulse nor the noise of self-interest, there is another kind of dust that he greatly treasures. That is the dust of the feet of the *bhakta* or *bhakta-pada-reṇu*. Therefore, since that kind of dust is not obtained by merely residing in the *bhakta*'s heart, he also follows after them, while remaining in their hearts, wishing to rub himself with the dust of their feet. Just hearing about his submissiveness to his *bhaktas* strikes at the hearts of and awakens goose-flesh in the bodies of the *bhaktas*: "Our Lord is so subservient to his *bhakta*!"

Now, a question might arise: since Bhagavān eternally rests in the heart of the *bhakta*, in order to attain the dust of the feet of the *bhakta* he must leave that place and come outside. How can he in one form and at one time both rest in the *bhakta*'s heart and follow after the *bhakta*, too? In reply it must be said that Bhagavān is the possessor of all powers — he is the seat of all, inconceivable, contradictory and uncontradictory powers. Just as *śruti* says: "Seated he travels far; lying down he moves everywhere."⁶⁷ Since all difficult-to-accomplish, contradictory characteristics coexist in him simultaneously, he is Bhagavān — he is the regulator of all — the possessor of all powers. This inconceivable possession of

⁶⁷ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.2.21: आसीनो दूरं व्रजति, शयानो याति सर्वतः

all powers demonstrates the Bhagavān-ness of Bhagavān [of the godhood of God]. Therefore, although he relaxes and lies down in the heart of the *bhakta*, following after a *bhakta* out of a desire for the dust of the feet of the *bhakta* is not at all impossible for him. That is because while remaining in one form he is able to reveal many forms⁶⁸ and while remaining in one place he is able to go everywhere — through his possession of inconceivable power. What more can be said? Śrī Bhagavān wants to decorate his body with the ornament of the dust of the feet of that sort of [pure-hearted] *bhakta*. He is more infatuated with desire for the dust of the *bhakta's* feet than he is with desire for the Sāmantaka, Kaustubha, and other precious jewels.

Therefore, the topic of the Lord's innate desire for the dust of the feet of the *bhakta* under the control of his subservience to the love of the *bhakta* is mentioned in the *Bhāgavata* in the following manner from the Lord's own lips:

I always follow after the independent, peaceful, enmity-less, sage who sees all as equal so that I may be purified by the dust from his feet.⁶⁹

His activity of following after the *bhakta* is practiced without their knowledge in the greatest secrecy. This most compassionate and subservient Bhagavān does not want, by his pursuit of the *bhakta*, to be a cause of pain to the mind or of the shying away of the *bhakta*. Therefore, this play of the dust is secret so that the *bhakta's* mind is not disturbed. For this reason this sport is carried out without the knowledge of the *bhakta*.

The words "I may be purified" [from the verse above] are glossed in Śrīdhara Svāmin's commentary in this way: "the meaning is

⁶⁸Śruti: एकं सन्तं बहुदा दृश्यमानम्

⁶⁹Bhāg., 11.14.15:

निरपेक्षं मुनिं शान्तं निर्वैरं समदर्शनम् ।
अनुब्रजाम्यहं नित्यं पूयेत्यङ्घ्रिरेणुभिः ॥

that this is done with the feeling ‘let me purify all the universes that exist within me.’” In other words, “my following of the *bhakta* is done with the purpose of purifying all the universes inside me with the dust of his feet.”

Just as the *bhaktas* possess *bhakti* for Bhagavān, Śrī Bhagavān possesses *bhakti* for his *bhaktas*. That, too, is clearly stated in the *Bhāgavata*: “Thus, o king, Bhagavān has *bhakti* for his *bhaktas*.”⁷⁰ The external manifestation of the internal, mutual affection between Bhagavān and his *bhakta* takes form in the unlimited sports of the Lord.

Apart from fulfilling the wishes of the *bhakta*, Śrī Bhagavān has no other inclinations. The highest expression of Śrī Bhagavān’s desire for the dust of the feet of the *bhakta* is found in the dust-game of the sports of Vraja. After herding the cows, at the cow-dust time [the time of the return to the village of the herds], after adorning his curl-circled face and sacred body with the dust of Vraja kicked up by the hooves of the cows, Śrī Hari, the son of Nanda, returns to his house. In the dust of Vraja the dust of the feet of all the *bhaktas* of Vraja is present. Among those again there is a hierarchy and the more desirable dust is the dust of the feet of the cowherd girls. Although the dust of the feet of all the *bhaktas* is dear to him, the highest satisfaction of his desire is found in the dust of the feet of cowherd girls headed by Śrī Rādhā. Therefore, in the words of the Vaiṣṇava poet it has been suggested: “It is not dust, it is not dust — the dust of the feet of the cowherd girls. That dust, Kānu, the son of Nanda, rubbed on himself.”⁷¹ The zenith of the game of dust is found here — in being sprinkled with the dust of the feet of Śrī Rādhā.

Brahmā’s austerities lasting for for sixty thousand years, performed out of desire to obtain the dust of the feet of the cowherd women so highly prized by Bhagavān himself, was fruitless. He did not obtain it:

⁷⁰*Bhāg.*, 10.86.59: एवं स्वभक्तयो राजन् भगवान् भक्तभक्तिवान्

⁷¹*dhūlā naya dhūli naya gopīpadareṇu; ei dhūlā mekhechila nandasūta Kānu*

Previously, I practiced austerities for sixty thousand years to obtain the dust of the feet of cowherd women of Nandagopa. Still, the dust of their feet was not obtained by me.⁷²

Therefore, even the best of *bhaktas*, Uddhava, praises the dust of the feet of the cowherd girls:

I praise in all respects the dust of the feet of Nanda's women of Vraja whose singing of the story of Hari purifies the three worlds.⁷³

Just as that dust is the highest desire of every *bhakta* when he recalls that there exists in this dust of Vraja of the dust of the feet of Bhagavān along with the dust of the feet of *bhaktas*, so is it for Bhagavān in his desire for the dust of the feet of the *bhakta*. Therefore, the highest limit of Śrī Bhagavān's desire for the dust of the feet of the *bhakta* and the greatness of the dust of the feet of the *bhakta* is culminates in the dust of the feet of the cowherd girls, or rather, in the dust of Śrī Rādhā's feet.

This dust of the feet of the *bhaktas* has for a long time been the Lord's most dear adornment. Therefore, in the Nadiyā sport the golden body of Śrī Gaura was seen to be covered with that dust again and again. For that reason, there was so much rolling on the ground in the dust with his followers. This was not for the

⁷²Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Laḡhu-bhāgavatāmṛta*, 2.31:

षष्टिवर्षसहस्राणि मया तप्तं तपः पुरा ।
नन्दगोपव्रजस्त्रीणां पादरेणूपलब्धये ।
तथापि न मया पाप्मास्तासां वै पादरेणवः ॥

⁷³*Bhāg.*, 10.47.63:

वन्दे नन्दव्रजस्त्रीणां पादरेणुमभीक्ष्णशः ।
यासां हरिकथोद्गीतं पुनाति भुवनत्रयम् ॥

insignificant earthly dust; it was because of Bhagavān's desire to be adorned by the dust of the feet of his *bhaktas* and it was also because of the desire of the *bhaktas* to be ornamented by the dust of the feet of Bhagavān that this rolling on the ground occurred.

Therefore, the *bhakta*, *bhakti* and Bhagavān — wherever these three are united and are of one mind, one life, and in full harmony, dancing in joy together, there is no way to tell which is greater and which is less great in conduct. Thus:

Love makes Kṛṣṇa dance;
the *bhakta*, too, it makes dance;
it itself dances too;
together the three dance.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, one must remember that in the seed *dharma* (religious observance) placed the *bhakta* saints, the holy name and the holy named are present in their real form as the cause of all causes. Since in one and the same person all that has been previously said is joined together in the great *bhakta*: “in determining the source of the birth of *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa, association with the saints is the chief of all.”⁷⁵ Therefore, it has been said:

The dust of the feet of the *bhakta*,
the *bhakta*'s foot-wash, too,
the remnants of the *bhakta*'s food,
these three have great strength.⁷⁶

Now we shall reflect on the freedom and independence of the saintly ones. Association with the saints and the attaining of their

⁷⁴Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Kavirāja, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Antya 18.17:

*kṛṣṇere nācāi premā bhaktere nācāi
āpane nācaye, tīne nāce ek thāñi*

⁷⁵ibid., Madhya 22.48.

⁷⁶ibid., Antya 16.55:

*bhaktapadadhūli āi bhaktapadajala
bhakta bhuktaśeṣe ei tin mahābala*

grace is spontaneous or causeless. In glossing the words *yādṛcchayā* [spontaneously] or *yādṛcchika* [spontaneous], Śrī Jīva has said: “by means of some kind of emergence of good fortune born of association with the most independent *bhakta* of the Lord or of that *bhakta*’s grace.”⁷⁷

Morover, since *bhakti*, too, is independent and self-established, it is capricious. For this reason, attaining the grace and association of the *bhakta*, the support or substrate of *bhakti*, is also spontaneous. For the attainment of *bhakti*, there is no regard for whether someone is a fit or unfit recipient, whether it is the right place or wrong place, whether it is the right time or wrong time or anything like that. Then, too, because of its extreme rarity, there is no certainty about who will get it, who will not get it. For that reason, a manifestation of pure *bhakti* is transmitted sometimes to a man and sometimes to a woman, sometimes to a child and sometimes to an old person, and sometimes to humans and sometimes to plants and animals. Since attaining association with the great ones is rare, pure *bhakti*, too, is very rare.

By the influence of pure *bhakti*, Śrī Bhagavān becomes attainable. Again, since association with saints is the source of the emergence of pure *bhakti*, only by the influence of association with the saintly is Śrī Bhagavān captured. As it is said:

Yoga does not capture me, nor does Sāṅkhya [cultivation of knowledge], Dharma [good works], study of Veda, penance, renunciation, rites, charity, vows, sacrifices, hymns, pilgrimage, nor restrictions and injunctions, the way I am captured by association with the holy, which dispels all attachments.⁷⁸

⁷⁷केनापि परमस्वतन्त्रभगवत्भक्तसङ्गतत्कृपाजातमङ्गलोदयेन

⁷⁸*Bhāg.*, 11.12.1-2:

न रोधयति मां योगो न साङ्ख्यं धर्म एव च ।
न स्वाध्यायस्तपस्त्यागो नेष्टापूर्तं न दक्षिणा ॥
व्रतानि यज्ञश्छन्दांसि तीर्थानि नियमा यमाः ।

If that is so, Śrī Bhagavān is arrested only by association with the saintly. This arrest or being caught in a trap is not a cause of distress for him. Like for a bee which by its own wish becomes stuck in the pod of a lotus, it is the cause of the greatest joy.

Therefore, the establishment of *dharmaśālās* (pilgrimage hotels), guest houses, nursing homes, roads to holy places, ponds and so forth and especially for householders the service of guests is recommended for this reason: to set traps to catch saintly persons in order ultimately to capture Bhagavān. If among the general populace who come to such places some saintly person is also in some way caught, then this is the main and hidden objective of the meritorious actions recommended in scripture. If that does not happen, at least one obtains some merit as a secondary result of those acts. Still, since the grace of a great saint is random and causeless, once in a while a *bhakta*-saint will allow himself to be caught. Therefore, it is often seen that they are willing to travel on well-traveled or current paths. Then, too, sometimes, they leave aside those well-traveled paths according to their own wills and independent desires and travel the forest paths—paths which have no connection with *dharmaśālās*, ponds and so forth. Take for instance the journey to Vṛndāvana on the forest path running through the Jhārikhaṇḍa of Śrīmān Mahāprabhu, who is Bhagavān himself immersed in the feelings of the *bhakta*, or Nārada's journey on the forest path towards Prayāga and his saving of that hunter, or Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmin's rejection of the royal path, the highway, for a lonely, less well known path on his journey to Purī; all of these examples demonstrate the saint's independence. So, too, the hidden objective of the householder's service to guests is said to be the possibility of attaining in some way association with the saintly. As scripture says:

Since from the mere recollection of such [saints] the houses of humans are made immediately pure, what

यथावरुद्धे सत्सङ्गः सर्वसङ्गापहो हि माम् ॥

more [needs be said about] actually seeing them, touching them, washing their feet, offering them places to sit and so forth.⁷⁹

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmin has given a lengthy discussion of this subject of association with the saintly in his *Bhakti-sandarbha*. The following subjects are recorded here very briefly from that. The accomplished or perfected *bhakta* is of three types: one whose impurities or sins are inactive (that is, *mūrchita*, fainted, unconscious, present but inactive), one whose impurities have been thoroughly cleansed away, and one who has obtained the body of a companion of Bhagavān.

One with inactive impurities is one in whom some semblance of inclinations for the sense objects remain, but they are like someone who has completely lost consciousness and thus they no longer have an active nature.

One cleansed of impurities is one in whom the inclinations for sense objects in the mind have been completely washed away.

One who has obtained the body of a companion of Bhagavān is one who has rejected his current body and attained companionship with the Lord in a consciousness body in the world of Bhagavān.

Among them, from association with saints of the first and the second types, pure *bhakti* is infused into the hearts of living beings. As a result of that:

1. The beginninglessly obstructed looking forward to Kṛṣṇa becomes revealed in the heart of the living being and along

⁷⁹*Bhāg.*, 1.19.33:

येषां संस्मरणात्पुंसां सद्यः शुच्यन्ति वै गृहाः ।
किं पुनर्दर्शनस्पर्शपादशौचासनादिभिः ॥

with that, the conceit of being the enjoyer, the doer, the master, the placing of one's identity in the body and the investing of one's sense of possession in one's house and other things is eliminated, faith arises, and gradually one's taste for sense objects begins to diminish. Other than in this way, the living being's timeless aversion towards Kṛṣṇa is not destroyed in any other way.

2. By listening to the showers of the nectar of pure *bhakti* in the form of presentations of stories about Hari (that is, discussions of his names, forms, qualities, and sports) from the mouths of saintly *bhaktas*, practical *bhakti* (*sādhana-bhakti*) is infused into the hearts of living beings. That brings about the rise of the highest goal, the *bhakti* of love, starting with faith, association with the saintly, active engagement in worship, and so forth.

If one has association with other kinds of saintly persons, apart from the primary and very rare association with saints of the two types described above, it is possible to attain good results their association according to the degree to which fondness for sense objects has diminished and *bhakti* for Bhagavān has developed in them.

Previously, we discussed the thread-possessing *bhakti* (*saguṇa-bhakti*) that is the true cause of success in the practices of ritualism, cultivation of knowledge, and so forth, which are undertaken out of some selfish desire or out of self interest. That kind of *bhakti* (received from the mouths of people other than the accomplished saint), being easily attainable, is spread throughout the world in many forms. From the mouths of reciters, singers, actors in traveling plays, in the descriptions of professional storytellers, in the songs of alms-beggars, in the performances of priests and in the instructions of teachers—the current of this thread-possessing *bhakti* flows unbroken throughout social and family life. By the influence of this thread-possessing *bhakti* sins are destroyed, the

progression of worldly birth and rebirth is stopped, merit is accrued, and even liberation is achieved. But, without the infusion of pure *bhakti* by the great ones, love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not arise.

One in whose mouth is found one name of Kṛṣṇa
is a Vaiṣṇava and I pay that one the highest respect.”⁸⁰

The understanding of this statement’s meaning depends on a lengthy consideration. One, however, can say this briefly on this subject: this statement is about another age, one that is free of offenses to the holy names or it applies to the time of the salvation of the whole collective of living beings when Śrī Gaura was present. At the present time, however, in a world overrun by offenses to the holy names impelled by the Kali Age, the literal meaning of this statement is not true. When, by the uncaused influence of association with the great, the mental operations of outward-looking living beings are turned within or rather are turned towards Kṛṣṇa, when in place of thread-possessing faith thread-free faith in Lord arises, then such persons because of that condition can be referred to by the words *bhakta* or Vaiṣṇava. Therefore, in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it has been said: “One who has faith is a candidate for *bhakti*, according to the highest, the middlemost, and the lowest faiths.”⁸¹

In other words, from the time that faith related to the Lord arises a person is qualified for *bhakti*, or, is called a *bhakta*—which quality of being a *bhakta* rises, according to the hierarchy of kinds

⁸⁰Cc., 2.15.107:

*yār mukhe eka Kṛṣṇanām
si vaiṣṇava — kari tār parama samān*

⁸¹ibid., 2.22.38:

*śraddhāvān jan hay bhaktye adhikārī
uttam, madhyam, kaniṣṭha śraddhā anusāri*

of faith, from lowest to highest in a *bhakta*. From the moment of becoming the lowest kind of *bhakta*, defined as having faith related to the Lord, one is a *bhakta* or a Vaiṣṇava. When one is in a state of offense to the holy names, though, even though reciting the holy names, since the Name is displeased it is not possible to reach easily the stage of being even the lowest kind of *bhakta*. Previously, though, that was possible by reciting the name of Kṛṣṇa just once.

What more than this can be said: it is heard that by offenses to the holy name even a *bhakta* falls into hell. As Śrī Jīva says:

And from the regulation that even someone who possesses *bhakti* for the Lord but who has an offense to the holy name must experience the result in the form of falling below.⁸²

At the present time those offenses to the holy name, caused by the Age of Kali, are spread practically everywhere. On this subject, a lengthy discussion in another book is required.

Therefore, that from which emerges faith related to the Lord and as a result of that faith pure *bhakti* or the mode of being or existence (*vṛtti*) that is related to the Lord, that gaining of association with the great thread-free *bhaktas* is by its very nature very rare. Thus, statements like “among billions of liberated beings rare is one who is a *bhakta* of Kṛṣṇa” are found, on the subject of which we have spoken previously.

⁸²Śrī Jīva, *Śrī Krama-sandarbhā*, 2.1.11: नामापराधयुक्तस्य भगवद्भक्तिमतोऽपि अधःपातलक्षणभोगनियमाच्च ।

Chapter Five