Topmost Achievable Goal

&

The Scientific Way to Achieve It

By

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Srimad Anantadâs Bâbâji Mahârâj

Translated from the Bengali original

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[1] The one who is sheltered at Radhakund
[2] For more nectarine literature please visit : www.kundeshwari.com and www.kundeshwari.com/sweetblog/

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Offering

"Topmost Achievable Goal & the scientific way to achieve it" is an exquisite text. Actually it is a manifestation of my Srí Srí Gurudev's mercy. Srí Srí Guru Mahârâj 108 Srí Srímat Kunjabeharí dâs Bâbâjí Mahârâj who has entered the ternal pastimes of the Divine coule is my sole refuge. This most fallen servant is offering this text in his sacred hands.

gyânam paramaguhyam me yadvigyâna-
samanvitam,
sarahasyam tadangancha grihâna gaditam mâyâ.
yâvânaham yathâbhâvo yadrupaguna-karmakah,
tathaiva tattvavigyânamastu te madanugrahât.

"I shall tell you the most secret knowledge which is completely scientific, and is characterized by insight and bhakti, and the methods of achieving it. Listen carefully to it!

Also you will learn through my mercy, the true scientific knowledge of my form, existence, identity, qualities and activities."

- (Chatuhshloki, 9th chapter of 2nd skandha of Srimad-Bhâgavatam)

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Sweet relish of majestic scientific philosophy

If we do not have true scientific knowledge of anything, we cannot get to the bottom of that substance. It is also important that knowledge has to come down in *paramparâ*[1]. Otherwise it is not possible to ascertain the Truth. The *Rishi*s have realized the Truth and they are able to behold it with their divine eyes. They have revealed the mysterious scientific principles of Truth to us which they have seen with their perfect vision. This is why we find a generous indication of the confidential knowledge that is *'Bhakti'* in the very first verse of *Chatuhshloki* of Srimad-Bhâgavatam. Sri *Bhagavân* Himself has imparted this instruction to Brahmâji, and this verse absolutely points to the scientific knowledge about the Divine Being. The Upanishads tell the eager students seeking the 'Truth' that the sages are the knowledgeable Gurus and that we should accept the information flowing down from them. Then we should ruminate on their instructions, relish them sweetly, analyze our inner self, question humbly from the learned ones, and this is the method to travel on the path of Truth.

The *sanâtan* or eternal process of our glorious country Bhâratvarsha is to take the refuge of the sacred feet of the Spiritual Master. This is the specialty of Indian culture. When we seek his shelter we learn how to behave correctly; not only this but we also gain a strong nature, clarity of vision and faith. These qualities flow into us like fragrant serene breeze. If our heart is not soft and *ras*-full, we shall not succeed in our endeavor. Therefore we need a Spiritual Master whose character is clean and his intellect shines with scriptural knowledge. If our Spiritual Master is not such, then our life will remain riddled with doubts and our *bhajan* will not bear fruit. However if we are fortunate to get such a Spiritual Master then our life will dazzle with joy. A Sadguru is the envoy of Sri *Bhagavân's* compassion on earth. He is the foremost messenger to bring the sweet message of our Beloved from the Realm of *Amritam.* He is the medium through which we manage to connect with that world which is beyond our perception.

Srimat Ananta dâs Bâbâji Mahârâj has accepted the shelter of Sri Râdhâkund in every manner and is full of supreme *shraddhâ*[2]. He has collected the scientific facts about the Spiritual Master, the devotee, Sri *Bhagavân,* Sri Krishna, Srimati Râdhârâni, devotion, the Holy Name, *Râgânugâ bhajan, prem* and *ras*, and has presented them beautifully in this text.

This text is a *ras*-casket of scriptural principles. Those who are enthusiastic to know about the topmost goal of life and how to achieve it, if we are ready to strive in the path of *bhajan*, and want to build our lives under the brilliant guidance of the principles that are founded on the scriptures – then this text is a jewel-like divine gift for us. Many devotees are inquisitive about the nectarine philosophy; for such devotees this text is a gem that will guide them in an easy and natural manner in devotional practice. We cannot progress on the path of devotion if we are not simple and if we are not steadfast. We have to have a very clear idea about *bhakta, bhakti* and *Bhagavân*. It is a science – a transcendental science. The principles propounded by the *shâstras* are transcendental, and guarantee success. Those who take joy in *bhajan,* love to hear from the *shâstras*, and put them into practice. Beneath our material experiences there lies an eternal indestructible power that controls us, yet it is detached from everything – to feel this we need to perform *sâdhanâ*.

This text talks about the Supreme Being, the soul, Sri *Bhagavân,* and it is a delicious combination of majesty, blissful and loving *ras*, devotion and *prem*. These are all supreme truths. This text enables us to relish them intimately.

Srimad-Bhâgavatam has revealed to us the relation with Sri *Bhagavân,* the necessity to attain Him and the process to do so. The relation with Sri *Bhagavân* is the only true relation, and the knowledge about Him is the transcendental science. When we serve Him and make Him happy,

[1] Unbroken disciplic succession
[2] Unflinching faith

we feel joy. This is the essence of Vaishnavism. We see in "Roy Râmânanda samvâd"[1] that Sriman-Mahâprabhu tells Roy -

"prabhu kohe podo shlok sâdhyero nirnoy."

Meaning - "The Lord said – recite a verse that elucidates the topmost achievable goal".

This indicates that the Lord was particular that we should ascertain our goal based on the *shâstra*s. Therefore we conclude that whatever is outside the *shâstra*s or contradicts them is to be rejected and it is unacceptable. Humankind has two natures – one is extrovert and the other is introvert. If we wish to enjoy sweet Truth our innermost sensory instruments would better be sharp and active. Also the instrument has to see facts based on Truth. Worldly science involves ideas about material subjects. It is ridden with fallacies, and it is temporary, while transcendental science is eternal. '*Sâdhanâ'* is the process by which we practice to perceive ourselves and our surrounding in a scientific manner. The main goal of our *sâdhanâ* is to adore the Supreme Being. If our goal is not fixed, our mind will be restless. Material science is short-sighted and cannot lead us to the right path. Therefore we need a Guru who is capable and worthy. When we take the shelter of the right Spiritual Master and then take the association of saintly devotees, we will become *bhajanânandi bhaktas*. Also these two factors drench our lives with *ras* and make the Supreme Being quickly available to us.

When we have faith and walk on the path of righteousness, then our belief in the Supreme Being blooms like a lotus flower. *Âsuric* thoughts cannot give us joy and beauty. Therefore we should mould our lives on the basis of the scriptures, lead clean lives and then our *sâdhanâ* will become all the more resplendent and serene.

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd is one of the foremost preceptors of Goudiya Vaishnavism. However his Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu which is a text book of *ras*-science is like a fathomless ocean. If we want to dive into it, and collect the gem-like principles, we will first have to become expert divers. Srila Raghunâth dâs Goswâmi, who is steadfast in Sri Râdhâ-*dâsya* and declares Srimati Râdhârâni to be the supreme, is the ideal for all *bhajanânandi mahâtmâ*s. He is a powerful beacon in the rules and regulations governing *bhakti sâdhanâ*. *Râgânugâ bhajan* is pure *sâdhanâ*. The associates of Sriman-Mahâprabhu has generously gifted us this process which we have to perform under the subjugation of the *gopi*s and in *gopi-bhâv*. The extremely rare specialty of *râgânugâ bhajan* is this – we have to perform *sevâ* of the Divine Couple under the expert guidance of Sri Guru-manjari. Then by her *kripâ* we shall get the *sevâ* of the Divine Couple in the *nikunja-mandir* that is echoing with the honey-like music of the anklets of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Govinda. Only a truly blessed soul is able to attain this. Such wonderful *sâdhanâ* does not exist anywhere else. Sriman-Mahâprabhu is the most munificent One and has revealed this remarkable Truth to us.

When our heart is drenched with the blessing of Sri Gurudev, then we truly realize the sweet sparkling desire to perform *sevâ*. Only by the mercy of the Spiritual Master we can feel very intense greed for *sevâ*. Srila Bâbâji Mahârâj has an extraordinary heart that is so hungry for *ras*! This is because he has relished the Holy Name, *prem* and *ras.* He is also brimming with scriptural knowledge. This book is a burning evidence of these facts. He has made us aware of the wonderful relish we can get in *sâdhak*-body; not only this, he has also stated how we can worship our Deity in the temple of our heart, and how we can enrich this adoration with expertise and get joyful exultation as an outcome.

The living being has false ego. Therefore, ignorance, illusion, and turning away from Sri *Bhagavân* overcome it. It cannot get out of this predicament. As a result, we have to resort to the Spiritual Master. He will open the divine gateway for us, since he is so merciful. We have been overwhelmed by illusion and ignorance since time infinite. Now the Spiritual Master will redeem us from material sorrow and lead us to eternal happiness.

[1] The transcendental conversation between Sriman-Mahâprabhu and Râmânanda Roy in Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita

Srila Bâbâji Mahârâj is an expert in the scriptures. He has a natural penchant for scholastic study of the same. Also he ruminates on the scriptural principles so much that when a devotee who is of a primary level, and is eager to enquire into the facts concerning the divine being, comes across his writing, he is sure to be satisfied. Often we are eager and also want to seriously perform *sâdhanâ*, yet we are embroiled in dilemma, and wonder what to do. Our situation becomes like one who wants to reach a destination, but does not know the geography of that place. Now we are the travelers of eternal journey, but we are confused about the spiritual geography. This brilliant book is a perfect manual for all such perplexed yet sincere souls. Vaishnav-*sâdhanâ* makes one humane, builds character, preaches self-surrender, and teaches us how to ascertain the Truth in an impartial manner. This book is magnificent in inculcating all these qualities; moreover it shows us how to enjoy devotional practice. Therefore it is good for all a*nurâgi* devotees. Sometimes we are bewildered so as to whom to worship. This book expertly clears all our doubts using scriptural logic. Srila Bâbâji Mahârâj is able to achieve this goal because of his superlative scholarship and mastery over these subjects. He states all the *bhakti*-principles boldly, analytically and courageously. Also his heart dazzles with purity, and each and every sentence of this magnificent book reflects this fact. Consequently the book becomes all the more worth meditating upon. For this, I wholeheartedly salute him.

Human beings are the sole beneficiaries of *ras* and *prem tattvas.* Only we can forget ourselves in relishing these exquisite subjects and obtain the grace of the condensed form of *bhâv-ras*, that is, Sri Krishna. We alone can enter that realm which is pervaded by the unified form of the Holy Name and the Named One (Sri Krishna). The beautiful blessings of the devotees and the Spiritual Master illuminate our hearts that are overcast by illusion. Such bounties awaken us from the pitch dark stupor of ignorance and our hearts then sparkle under the brilliant sunrays of their mercy. Then we feel truly inquisitive about *tattva,* and our *bhajan*-journey begins. We develop deep love for *bhajan* and feel blessed.

Sri Krishna is *Sach-chidânandamaya* and the sole refuge of every element. He is the Supreme truth. We can experience His three *shaktis*. Sriman-Mahâprabhu has told us that pure *bhakti,* that is *bhakti* devoid of *'gyân'* is the topmost achievable goal. When *gyân* or knowledge transforms into '*vishesh' gyân,* then it becomes '*vigyân*' or scientific knowledge. When we gain scientific knowledge, our confusions and dilemmas that actually arise out of illusion, are solved.

Srila Bâbâji Mahârâj is a superb expert in shâstras and his specialty is that he knows exactly what the shâstric principles indicate, that is, their true meaning. He is also experienced in *sâdhanâ*. He has got the immense *kripâ* of the shâstras because he is so much surrendered unto them. His heart is illuminated with the light of their blessing. This is why he has been able to pluck the various flower-like principles that are otherwise so difficult to comprehend, in lucid and stylish language. He has chosen these blossoms (principles) from different scriptures, each of which is like a beautiful garden. Then he has knit a garland with these flowers and has named it 'Topmost achievable goal & the scientific way to achieve it'. Srila Bâbâji Mahârâj's munificence has stupefied us!! This divine garland is very fragrant indeed. Unhesitatingly, we declare that it will alleviate all doubts lurking in the heart of anybody who is inquisitive about the Supreme Being. This text is beneficial to all who are truly interested in *tattva*, *ras, bhakti* and spiritualism.

I hope to remain,
the humble servant of the servants of the Vasihnavs,

Sri Binod Kishor Goswâmi,
Sri Gourânga Mandir,
Shribhumi,
Kolkata – 48.

Humble Request

The treasury of Vaishnav philosophy is vast and very deep. The Vaishnav texts too are full of rich information. It is near impossible to study all of them and then become an expert in Vaishnav devotional practice. Only a hard-working persistent and patient *sâdhak* can succeed in such an endeavor. Yet, without *tattva-gyân* how can we proceed in the path of *bhajan*? It is not possible. Many of us are interested in performing *sâdhanâ* and *bhajan*; however we lack the time, energy and patience to labor over copious Vaishnav-literature. Keeping such devotees in mind, we have presented this handbook called 'Topmost achievable Goal & How to achieve it'. It explains all the Vaishnav principles in easy, yet brief manner. We have dealt with ten principles here – love, our preceptors, the Goswâmis, have stated the entire philosophy in difficult language and very much in details. We have presented the same principles in simple language and in short. We sincerely hope that the *sâdhaks* who are eager to perform *bhajan* will now easily understand the truth and progress in the devotional path. If any *sâdhak* or *sâdhikâ* benefits even little bit from this book, we shall consider our endeavor as successful.

Most worshiped Prabhupâd Srijukta Binod Kishor Goswâmi Mahoday has showered his mercy on me by writing the preface to the book. I am extremely grateful to him. Srila Prabhupâd has written the introduction to few of my other books as well; they are all incomparable and wonderful prefaces. In this manner, he has expressed his grace on a fallen soul such as myself – I have no word to express my gratitude.

I also thank **Vishwajeet Pandey** and **Sangita Sangai** for proofreading. I pray that they make good progress in their *bhajan*. In spite of taking so much care, some mistakes still remain. My dear good devotees, please do rectify them since you are all-qualified, and please relish this book. I shall be ever grateful to you for this.

Your fallen servant,

Ananta das

(Editor).

Sri-Guru-Tattva-Vigyaan

(A Scientific study of the Spiritual Master)

Who is the Spiritual Master?

Sri Krishna, Who is God Himself, has defined the Spiritual Master to His dear devotee Sri Uddhav as follows (S.B. 11.17.27) –

Sri *Bhagavân* said-"O Uddhav! You should know the preceptor, meaning the Gurudev, to be myself and never disregard him. Do not find faults with him, taking him to be an ordinary human being for Sri Gurudev is the sum total of all *devatâs."*

"The scriptures proclaim the Gurudev as another form of Sri Krishna Who bestows His mercy upon the devotees in the form of Gurudev." - (C.C.)

All these scriptures prove that Sri Krishna appears in the world in the form of Gurudev to extend His mercy upon the devotees. His grace consists of invaluable *bhajan* of Sri Krishna, and the fruit of that *bhajan* is priceless *prem*. Sri Krishna, in the form of Sri Gurudev graces a surrendered disciple with these two precious gifts.

Sri Uddhav told Sri Krishna –"0 my Lord! A devotee has many sensual desires that are obstacles in the path of *bhajan*; You remove them externally in the form of Sri Gurudev who instructs in spiritual truth and internally in the form of good conscience. Thus You grant them realizations about You." - (S.B. 11.29.6)

We should remember that, although Sri Gurudev is as worshiped as Sri Krishna, he is not the ultimate object of worship like Sri Krishna. The Gurudev is the special devotee-manifestation of the Lord.

Gurudev is the special devotee-manifestation of the Lord.

"Although my Gurudev is the servant of Sri Chaitanya *Mahâ*prabhu (the Su*preme* Being), still I know him to be the Lord's manifestation."- (C.C.)

We must know Sri Gurudev as a special manifestation of the Lord in the form of the greatest saint - this is the true form of Sri Gurudev. In his Manah-Shiks*â* Srila Raghun*â*th dâs Gosw*â*mi has written –

"O Mind! Remember Shachisuta[1] Sri Goursundar as Sri Krishna and Sri Gurudev as Sri Krishna's dear most devotee!"

Srila Vishwan*â*th Chakravartip*â*d has also written in his Gurv*â*shtakam-

"All the scriptures proclaim Sri Gurudev to be Lord Hari Himself, and the great saints also feel that, but he is also Sri Krishna's dear most devotee - I offer my obeisance unto the lotus feet of such Sri Gurudev."

The point is that although we should perceive Sri Gurudev as Sri Krishna's dear most devotee, we should also consider him to be His actual manifestation. If we do not think like that we may start considering Gurudev to be an ordinary mortal. This is a great offense that will make all our devotional practice fruitless, like an elephant's bath[2].

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[1] The son of mother Shachi

[2] After an elephant takes bath and comes out of the water, it sprinkles dust on itself. Srimad-Bhâgavatam (7.15.26) says - "A Spiritual Master is non-different from the Lord. He lights the lamp of transcendental knowledge. If one is so foolish as to see the Spiritual Master as an ordinary mortal, all his spiritual studies will be wasted and useless, just like lie bath of an elephant."

Why is it necessary to take shelter of Sri Gurudev's lotus feet?

If we want to worship the Su*preme* Being then we must first of all take shelter of the lotus feet of Sri Gurudev. We will never be able to perform devotional practice if we do not take shelter of the lotus feet of Sri Gurudev, because this is the gate through which one enters the path of *bhakti.* We cannot master any discipline without the guidance of an expert preceptor, then how can we accomplish perfection in spiritual science that is a more complex and difficult process? Another special feature of devotional knowledge is that the merciful Sri *Bhagavân* has personally appeared in this world in the form of Gurudev to teach us *bhakti.*

We have briefly discussed the Guru-*tattva* here. When we understand the *Gurutva* (gravity) of Guru-*tattva*, then we will not have any doubt about the importance of taking shelter of Sri Gurudev. We do not know the true form of Sri Gurudev, what is Sri Gurudev made of and what is the positive result of surrendering unto Sri Gurudev. Therefore we are bound to have many questions regarding surrendering unto Sri Gurudev. However, if we associate with pure devotees we can gain knowledge on all these topics. We can not deeply realize the Guru-*tattva* without the association of pure devotees. Therefore if we desire the highest welfare and hence wish to practice devotion, the scriptures and the great saints advise us to associate with the saints. In Srimad-Bh*â*gavatam Lord Kapiladev told His mother Devahuti -

"When you attain the excellent company of the saints, your heart and the ears relish my glory like nectar. The topics related to my excellences are the quickest means to get rid of ignorance. Anyone who lovingly enjoys hearing them will gradually develop faith, attachment and devotion for me." – (S.B.3.25.25)

This indicates that by hearing topics on the Su*preme* Lord from the great saints we gain scriptural faith, and then we take shelter of a *sadguru;* we begin *bhajan* (that is so precious) as a result of which *rati* and *prem* gradually develop. We have been wandering (reincarnating) through different species of life since time infinite and by the Lord's grace we have got this human body, which is the gateway to liberation from repeated birth and death. The most fortunate amongst human beings are they who have acquired the association of the saints. When we hear about Sri Krishna from the greatly realized devotees of the Lord, the heart, which is polluted by attachment to the sense objects, will be somewhat purified and we will realize that the body and everything related to it is temporary, and the ocean of temporary material seems impossible to cross. We will also comprehend that this material world is full of agony and lust and anger are attacking us every moment like dangerous sharks and crocodiles. Then we will become eager to cross the impassable and miserable ocean of material existence to attain the eternally blissful lotus feet of the Lord. We can use our invaluable human body to achieve this goal; however first of all we have to find a worthy captain – who is none other than Sri Gurudev. In Srimad-Bh*â*gavatam Sri Krishna has told Uddhav –

"O Uddhav! This human body is the root cause of all welfare, and it is expert in accomplishing its goal. The living entity attains this human body which is extremely rare. It is like an excellent boat that has Sri Gurudev as its captain. Moreover, I am providing favorable breeze to steer it in the right direction. A person who does not endeavour to cross the ocean of material existence despite having received this body is committing suicide." - (S.B.11.20.17)

We have already discussed that in the company of devotees we come to realize that we should take shelter of a Spiritual Master. Thus it is logical that if we do not feel it necessary to surrender unto a Spiritual Master, we must not have associated with devotees in the true sense. Whenever someone has associated with devotees or is in the company of devotees right now, yet he has not realized the seriousness of taking the refuge of Sri

Gurudev, we must understand that he has not got the real association of saints or the person has committed something foul, due to which the saintly relation is not showing result. As long as we do not gain the shelter of Sri Gurudev's lotus feet, the ultimate fruit of association with the devotees is – 'surrendering unto Sri Gurudev', for *bhajan* begins only after taking initiation and instructions from a *sadguru*.

The Characteristics of a *sadguru*

When we wish to be blessed with the benefit of devotional practice and we desire to take shelter of Sri Gurudev it is absolutely necessary that we commit ourselves at the feet of a *sadguru* alone.

Who is a *sadguru?*

When the Gurudev-potency awakens within a saint he becomes a *sadguru*. This Gurudev-potency awakens within a saint in the following way. He should have purified his heart through devotional practice. *Bhakti* awakens in him and he gains beautiful saintly qualities such as compassion and kindness. His heart melts when he sees the agony of the materially bound souls. By instructing devotional practice to these human beings he destroys their miserable condition and is extremely anxious to bless them by giving them the relish of *bhakti ras*. By the Lord's wish the Gurudev-potency emanates from Him and appears within the heart of such a *bhakti siddha* great saint.

When we covet devotion for the Su*preme* Lord, we are blessed by taking shelter of such a qualified *sadguru*. Srimad-Bhâgavatam has described the characteristics of such a *sadguru*[1] -

"Therefore a person who inquires about the highest welfare should take shelter of a *sadguru*, **who is expert in the Word** (Vedic scriptures) and is **'realized in the Su*preme* Being'**. He also has to be free from lust and greed." - (S.B.11.3.21)

Sridhar Swâmi writes in his commentary on this verse: That the *sadguru* is 'expert in the Word' means that he is learned in Vedic literature and knows of the Truth. If he is not, then he cannot remove the doubts of the disciples who take his shelter. Then again he has to be 'realized in the Su*preme* Being', which means that He is a devotee, or that He is endowed with transcendental realizations about Sri Krishna. Otherwise he cannot inspire his disciple with *bhajan*-realizations."

The question may arise, "We may be able to discern whether the Spiritual Master is expert in the Word by seeing and hearing from him about the scriptures, but how will we know if he is realized in the Su*preme* Being?" The answer to this is, he should *be upâsantasraya,* or devoid of lust, anger and greed. When *bhakti* enlightens a heart, the darkness of lust and greed cannot shroud it. **Therefore the characteristics of a *sadguru* given by *the shâstras* are as follows**:

1) He has realizations about Sri *Bhagavân* due to his solid faith and firm perseverance in *bhajan*. He has attained the grace of his own Gurudev by being similarly devoted to his lotus feet.

2) He is well-versed in the *Vedas* and in bhakti-scriptures that highlight the true Vedic purport such as Srimad-Bhâgavatam. Thus he can wipe out the doubts of his disciples.

3) Because he has transcendental realizations about Sri Krishna he has attained His mercy. Thus he has become so powerful that he is able to bring the disciple on to the path *of bhakti* and infuse this power within him.

4) He is not overcome by vices like lust and greed.

[1] Later on we shall describe these characteristics more in detail

A saint who is endowed with such qualities and who has parental love for his disciples can attain the position of a *sadguru*. Such a *sadguru* is able to obliterate various obstacles that may hinder the disciple in his *bhajan.* He can bless the disciple with *prem* and bring him to the lotus feet of Sri Krishna. On the other hand, a person who desires to become famous as a Gurudev may have many virtues, like high birth etc., yet if he does not have the above mentioned characteristics he will not be counted as a *sadguru*. Therefore if we are sincere and are eager to do Sri Krishna-*bhajan* we should unto a saint who is endowed with the right qualities, receive initiation in Sri Krishna-*mantra* and learn *bhajan* from him.

Common Characteristics of a Sadguru

One who has the following characteristics is a *sadguru* –

- learned in the *Vedas*
- has realization about Sri Krishna
- most peaceful
- possesses Sri Krishna-*bhakti*
- realizes Sri Krishna's glory as the One Who loves His devotees
- has offered his heart to Sri Krishna
- has a pure body (is free from disease)
- has conquered the six enemies such as lust
- has deep *râg-bhakti* for Sri Krishna
- knows the immaculate path of the Vedic literatures
- is approved of by the *sadhus*
- has control over his senses
- is steadfast in the Su*preme* Being - (Hari-Bhakti-Vil*â*s 1.32-35)

Special Characteristics of a *Sadguru*

A Spiritual Master who has the following characteristics is glorious –

- born in a faultless and sinless family
- is of unblemished character
- is careful about his conduct
- belongs to a certain *âshram*
- is free from anger
- knows the *Vedas*
- knows all other scriptures
- has faith
- does not find fault
- speaks affectionately
- is nice to behold
- pure
- nicely dressed
- young in mind
- engaged in the welfare of all living beings
- intelligent
- without arrogance
- satisfied
- nonviolent
- able to analyze transcendental truths
- endowed with parental love
- expert in worshiping the Su*preme* Lord
- thankful
- affectionate towards his disciples
- able to justly punish and reward
- practices *hom-mantra*

- learned in the art of debating
- pure-hearted
- merciful - (Hari-Bhakti-Vil*â*s 1.38-41)

The Spiritual Master's mercy is Special

There is a difference in the mercy of Sri Hari and that of Sri Gurudev. The Upanishads say - "A person to whom Sri Hari wishes to lower in His eyes - He will make him perform wrong deeds, and He gives erroneous instructions to evil people." But the *â*ch*â*rya wants to elevate and engage everyone in saintly activities. He always speaks the right words everywhere. Therefore we should prefer the grace of Sri Gurudev rather than that of Sri Hari.

Who is an *âchârya*?

After all the scriptures define a preceptor as –"An *âchârya* is one who always pronounces (preaches) the scriptural injunction, follows them himself, and also teaches others to act accordingly."

How do we get a *Sadguru?*

Some people think that a *sadguru* is very rare in this world and it is not easy to recognize and get one. Thinking like this, they do not endeavour to take *dikshâ mantra* and thus waste the precious moments of their rare human life. In this context we would like to state that the Lord Himself descends as *sadguru* for the welfare of the world; then for a genuine seeker, someone who is serious about performing *bhajan* and those who are eager to take shelter of a *sadguru,* He can never be hard-to-get or unattainable. We should give up crookedness and associate with pure devotees with a simple and innocent mind to rid us of material miseries. We should be anxious to get a *sadguru* so that we may perform devotional practice. To achieve this we should pray wholeheartedly to the Lord. Then He will bless us with a *sadguru* – harbor no doubt about it. Sri Hari is merciful. He will most certainly grant earnest devotees their heartfelt wish.

Shelter of Sri Gurudev's Lotus-feet

Srimat Rupa Gosw*â*mip*â*d has stated 64 items of *bhajan.* The first three are -

1. Taking shelter of Sri Gurudev's feet
2. Taking initiation into Sri Krishna-*mantra* and learning Bh*â*gavata-*dharma* (the process of worshipping Sri Krishna) from him
3. Serving Sri Gurudev with faith. - (Bhakti-Ras*â*mrita-Sindhu 1.2.74)

Sri Chaitanya-Charit*â*mrita states the same -

guru pâdâshroy, dikshâ, gurur seban
- (C.C.)

Guru pâdâshroy means that a person who wishes to practice devotion must live near Sri Gurudev's feet for a while before taking initiation, and sincerely render service to him according to his wishes, so that Sri Gurudev is pleased. The scriptures say it is also necessary that the Spiritual Master and the disciple should test each other before initiation. In this way both Gurudev and disciple can examine each other's nature and qualification. If they do not do this, then both may experience obstacles in their *bhajan* in the future. In other words, if the Gurudev does not have the characteristics that the *shâstra* describe the disciple will inevitably experience obstacles in *bhajan* and if the disciple is not qualified then the Gurudev too will face problems. Not only this, the mutual

examination also has a very valuable outcome. When the *sâdhak* who is eager to receive *dikshâ*, stays for a few days with the Gurudev and serves him he will also become qualified for both *dikshâ* and *bhajan.* On the other hand, the Sri Gurudev-*tattva* will melt in compassion when he sees the sincere service rendered by such a great devotee. The aspirant achieves **an important goal of human life** by attaining the *dikshâ mantra* from Sri Gurudev. Since Sri Gurudev is satisfied with the disciple's service his heart is melting with compassion and hence the aspirant will be blessed with the true relish of ambrosial *bhakti ras.* Here it is noteworthy that a great saint, who has extraordinary powers, can examine the qualifications of a disciple on mere sight, or can make an unqualified applicant at once qualified and can thus give initiation to a candidate at once. The above rules and regulations do not apply to such saints. This, however, is not appropriate for everyone.

***Dikshâ* or initiation**

What do we mean by *dikshâ* or initiation? In his Bhakti-Sandarbha (283) Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd quotes the *shâstra* to describe the greatness of initiation-- "The *âchâryas* who know the truth define '*dikshâ*' as that which bestows divine knowledge and destroys all sins."

What do we mean by *dikshâ?*

Sri Jivapâd adds: "Here 'divine knowledge' means the knowledge about the Lord's *swarup* which lies within the *mantra,* along with special knowledge about our relationship with the Lord."

"The *swarup* of the living entity is that he is Krishna's eternal servant. He is Krishna's *tatasthâ shakti* and so he is both different and non-different from Him."– (C.C.)

Although we are Sri Krishna's eternal servant, we have been averse to the Lord since time infinite. Hence ignorance and illusion have gripped us. Since we are under such illusion we identify with our false body, senses and mind. We forget our own *swarup* and call this false body "I". We forget our eternal relationship with Sri Hari and become bound to spouse, children and money.

"The living being has forgotten that he is Sri Krishna's eternal servant, and due to that fault *mâyâ* has tied a noose round his neck." – (C.C.)

In this way, although we are originally transcendental, we are bound by *mâyâ* and wander around in the miserable material world, reincarnating from one species to the other. Thus we suffer the pain of birth, disease, old age and death. Sri Gurudev mercifully cuts the bondage of *mâyâ* and breathes transcendental energy into our heart. Thus he awakens awareness in us – about who we are and our eternal and special relationship with Sri Hari - this is ***dikshâ***.

Then again, **the *mantra* is non-different from the Lord**. By the grace of the pure devotees and the Spiritual Master, who are the condensed form of Sri Hari's mercy, the Lord enters the disciple's heart in the form of *mantra* to make his body, mind and life-airs transcendentally suitable for serving the Lord. Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has said with His holy lips-

"At the time of initiation the devotee surrenders himself and at that time Sri Krishna makes him His own. The Lord then makes the devotee's body transcendental and in this transcendental body the devotee serves His lotus feet." – (C. C.)

Some know the glory of surrendering unto a *sadguru* and taking initiation, yet think that it is not necessary to take *dikshâ*. Their idea is that chanting the Holy Name alone will suffice. It is easy to guess what enormous loss they are suffering in spiritual life. However the Gosw*â*mis have a different opinion about this. They say that –

If someone knows the glory of *dikshâ*, yet he is averse to taking the shelter of a *sadguru*, he is only committing an offense when he chants the Holy Name.

This is because the *shâstras* and *Mahâjans* have glorified *dikshâ* and have stated that *dikshâ* is eternal; the present day devotees too are practicing such purificatory process. Still, he is disregarding the *shâstra* and *Mahâjan* on one hand, and showing contempt for the institution of Guru-*tattva* on the other[1] – both are very strong offences.

Dikshâ-Mantra

Of all the different *mantras* that have been mentioned by the *shâstras* in connection with *dikshâ,* the Sri Krishna-*mantra* is the most important, because Sri Krishna is *Swayam Bhagavân* and is the origin of all divine forms. Sri Krishna performs divine pastimes in three Holy Abodes - Vrindâban, Mathurâ and Dwârakâ. The greatest quality of Sri *Bhagavân* - sweetness - is manifest in Sri Vrindâban alone where Sri Krishna plays like a cowherd boy. Therefore the *mantras* in connection with this Vrindâban-*leelâ* are the greatest. Then again the 10-syllable[2] and 18-syllable 'Gopi-janavallabh' *mantra,* that induce the topmost *ras (*that of *madhur leelâ*)*,* are the greatest of all. Although these *mantras* are all present in sacred books, their *jap* will yield no fruit without initiation! We must receive the *mantra* from the *sadguru*[3].

Some people also consider the 16-word, 32-syllable Hare Krishna *Mahâmantra*[4] *as a dikshâ mantra,* but no scripture on initiation consider *Harinâm Mahâmantra* as *dikshâ mantra,* because if it is chanted out loud, how can it be counted amongst the *dikshâ mantras?* In some places it is a custom to give *Harinâm* before *dikshâ to* purify the ears and the heart, but we cannot call it *dikshâ.* The question may arise –

When the Hare Krishna *mantra* is called the *Mahâmantra,* then will we not attain perfection by taking this *mantra* alone? And why will we not achieve '*dikshâ*' – which is our goal – by taking this *mantra*?

The answer to this is that the Hare Krishna *mantra* is called the *Mahâmantra* because it is more powerful than any other *mantra* in bestowing *prem.* Still, the rule is that a *dikshâ mantra* must have a dative case ending and the six standard sequences that form a certain pattern of composition. Since the *Mahâmantra* does not have this it is not *a dikshâ mantra.* We should know that when we take *Harinâm* before *dikshâ*, the *Mahâmantra* blesses us by giving us a *sadguru* and he instructs us about *bhajan*; after taking *dikshâ* the result of *Harinâm* is *prem.*

***Dikshâ*-Guru and *Shikshâ*-Guru**

The one who gives *dikshâ mantra is* our *Dikshâ*-Guru, while the one who instructs us about *bhajan* is the *Shikshâ*-Guru. Srimad-Bhâgavatam says –

"Take *dikshâ mantra* from the Spiritual Master and then take the instructions regarding the rules and gain knowledge of the *shâstras* from him."

[1] *Gurvavagyâ* and *Shruti-shâstra-nindâ* – these are the two offences
[2] The 10-syllable *mantra* is meant for the brahmins by birth.
[3] Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd explains this in his purport to Srimad-Bhâgavatam (11.21.15)
[4] Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Râm Hare Râm Râm Râm Hare Hare

Therefore we understand that the Spiritual Master, who gives *dikshâ,* also has to instruct the disciple about how to take the *mantra*. The *shâstras* want us to take the shelter of a *sadguru*; we should not think that he is incapable of imparting instructions. If we think like this we are reducing the stature of Sri Gurudev and this is an offence. However if the Spiritual Master disappears before we have got *bhajan*-instructions from him, we can accept a great devotee who is equally expert in *bhajan* as our *Shikshâ*-Guru and serve him like we would have served our own Gurudev. Sri Krishna Himself is a *Shikshâ*-Guru who resides in our heart to give us *bhakti* and externally He is present in the form of Spiritual Master and makes us His own. Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says –

"*Shikshâ*-Guru is Sri Krishna personified. He resides in our heart as the overseer and also appears as the topmost devotee." – (C.C.)

The *Shikshâ*-Guru who lives in our heart (*antaryâmi)* does not appear before us. He is called *chaitya-Guru* (the One Who resides in our *chitta* or sub-conscious mind). We should not confuse Him with Paramâtmâ Who regulates the ones who are turned away from Sri *Bhagavân* and inspires their intellect. That Paramâtmâ is not the One Who controls a devotees' heart. He does not instruct a devotee as '*chaitya-guru'*. That divine form Whom we worship as Deity, He is our *Antaryâmi*. He appears in our heart as *Shikshâ*-Guru, instructs us and inspires the norms and rules of *bhâv* in us. Also it is Sri Krishna Himself Who appears as His dear most devotee outside our heart and imparts face-to-face teachings about *bhajan*.

There is an opinion that we should take '*shikshâ-mantra'* from a *shikshâ*-Guru – otherwise we cannot perform *bhajan*. This is contrary to scriptural injunctions. According to the scriptures and *Mahâjans* there is nothing such as '*shikshâ-mantra'*. We should not allow anyone to cheat us by succumbing to such wrong preaching.

Serving Sri Gurudev

The duties of the disciple do not end after taking *dikshâ* from the *sadguru*. There is a special need to serve Sri Gurudev after taking initiation, because when Sri Gurudev is pleased, then all obstacles in *bhajan* will be destroyed and Lord Krishna will be pleased. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written in his Bhakti Sandarbha –

"We have many bad qualities that we are unable to get rid of in spite of various endeavors. However if we please the Spiritual Master these qualities get destroyed. Moreover Sri Hari will also be most pleased when the disciple pleases Sri Gurudev."

Srila Goswâmipâd is indicating that when we make headway on the path of *bhajan*, then all kinds of powerful bad qualities cultivated in previous lives or in this life due to various offenses, raise their ugly heads and disturb our devotional practice. Nevertheless, we will not be able to get relief from these evil traits on our own, although we may try various means. The only way to destroy these traits is to please Sri Gurudev.

Also, the only way to make Sri *Bhagavân* happy is to please Sri Gurudev. From this we can realize Sri Gurudev's satisfaction is the root of devotional practice and its result - that is - the destruction of all kinds of bad qualities and the attaining the love of Sri Krishna. Another way to please Sri Gurudev is to serve him honestly. We learn from Srimad-Bhâgavatam that all evil traits are destroyed when we serve Sri Gurudev with devotion.

Sri Nârad told King Yudhisthir - "My dear King, to give up lust one must give up planning for enjoyment, to give up anger one must give up lust, because when lust is frustrated, anger arises, and to give up greed one must see the evil of money and all things it can buy. We can conquer fear by constantly analyzing the truth, we can give up grief and illusion by considering what is material and what is spiritual; we can crush our pride by serving a devotee. We can gain concentration by forsaking all talks other than that pertaining to Sri Krishna and thus we achieve perfection in keeping the vow of silence (since the vow of

silence is rendered perfect not when we simply maintain silence, but when we give up all talks other than Sri Krishna-kathâ). We can conquer violence by giving up endeavors for sense gratification. We can mitigate the suffering caused by other living entities by developing compassion and we can alleviate the suffering caused by natural elements (such as heat, cold etc.) by entering into *samâdhi.* We can end the suffering caused by our body and mind by practicing the eight-fold path of *âshtânga yog.* When we are in the mode of goodness (free from passion and ignorance) we can conquer sleep[1]. When we increase our goodness, naturally our ignorance and passion decrease. In this way one process destroys one bad tendency, but we can conquer all these vices and simply by serving Sri *Gurudev* with devotion*."* - (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 7.15.22-25)

Thus we see how important it is to serve Sri Gurudev if we want to give up all bad qualities.

Special *sevâ* of Sri Gurudev

In Bhakti-Sandarbha Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written –
"Although it is true that when we take refuge at Sri *Bhagavân's* lotus feet, we achieve the topmost goal, if we wish to accomplish that 'something special' then we have to necessarily serve our *shikshâ-Guru* , who instructs in the divine scriptures, and *dikshâ-Guru* who initiates us in the divine *mantra* regularly in a special manner."

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd uses the words "*visheshatah sevâm kuryât"* – thus indicating that we should serve Sri Gurudev in a special manner (*vishesh* = special) As soon as we talk of 'special *sevâ*' it naturally follow as that there must be an 'ordinary *sevâ'*.

What do we mean by '*ordinary* Guru-*sevâ*'?

After taking *dikshâ*, we worship Sri Hari by hearing, glorifying, performing *archanam, jap* etc daily. As a part of this daily routine, we worship and glorify Sri Gurudev. Therefore, we see that for us the hearing, *jap* etc are the main activities and Sri Gurudev's *sevâ* is a part of these activities. This is 'ordinary Guru-*sevâ*'.

What is *'special* Guru-*sevâ'*?

If a devotee has single-pointed Guru-*bhakti* and is completely dedicated to Sri Gurudev's *sevâ*, he will consider that *sevâ* to be the most important aspect and for him hearing, glorifying etc. will be a part of Sri Guru-*sevâ*. Whatever *sâdhanâ* he performs it is only to please his Gurudev. For him, Sri Gurudev's satisfaction is the only aim. He strives to fulfill all the injunctions of *bhakti* only because it will please the Spiritual Master. This is 'special Guru-*sevâ*'. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has called such a devotee as '*vaishishtya-lipsu'* (one who craves for something special). Sri *Bhagavân* showers *kripâ* on such a devotee (more than the one who serves Him). We find that Mother Devahuti is praying in Sri Padma Purân –
"If I have more devotion for my Spiritual Master than I have for Sri Hari then He may give me *darshan."*

When the Spiritual Master is pleased, Sri Hari is naturally happy with us.

Vâman-kalpa says –
"'Sri Gurudev is verily the *mantra* and Sri Gurudev is none other than Sri Hari; when Sri Gurudev is pleased with us Sri Hari is also pleased."

Things to beware of while serving Sri Gurudev

We should be especially careful when serving Sri Gurudev, who is so glorious. Srila Thâkur *Mahâ*shay has said –
"The lotus feet of Sri Gurudev are the abode of pure devotion. I pay obeisance to them with great care."

[1] Get the correct amount of sleep and good quality sleep, or feel relaxed with less sleep

When we consider Sri Gurudev as ordinary human being, we commit the third offence to the Holy Name – that is – disregard for the Spiritual Master. It will deprive us of the great fruits of Guru-*sevâ*. While serving the Spiritual Master we should beware of the following—

- We should never disobey Sri Gurudev.
- We should never step on or use Sri Gurudev's shoes, garments, bathing water, bed and other utilities.
- Do not pronounce Sri Gurudev's name in a casual way. When it is absolutely necessary we should bow down, fold the hands and pronounce different reverential titles of the Gurudev such *as 'astottara shata Sri Sri', 'om vishnupâd', 'prabhupâd'* and so on, before saying his actual name.
- Never imitate the gait, speech, voice or gestures of the Gurudev.
- We should not spread our legs, place one leg over the other or point the feet at the Gurudev.
- Do not yawn, laugh loudly, break the finger-joints, sway the body or make hands, feet or any other limb dance in front of the Spiritual Master.
- We should not sit down in front of Sri Gurudev without his prior permission, but stand before him with folded hands.
- Do not lie down on a bed in front of Sri Gurudev.
- When we live in the presence of Sri Gurudev, we should never go anywhere without his permission.
- Do not worship or praise anyone else in front of the Gurudev.
- Do not explain the *shâstras* in front of Sri Gurudev.
- Do not give initiation without Sri Gurudev's permission.
- Do not display superiority over others and do not chastise others in front of Sri Gurudev.
- Do not say anything to Sri Gurudev that sounds like an order.
- Do not make any gesture or hints in front of him, like flapping the hands or winking with the eyes.
- We should always tolerate Sri Gurudev's rebukes and must never respond with hatred, ill will or envy.
- Never take anything from Sri Gurudev without his permission.
- It is also a cause of offense to remain silent in front of Sri Gurudev, not to praise him or not to ask him any questions about *bhajan.*
- Even if the disciple has taken a vow of silence he should not remain silent in front of Sri Gurudev.
- Do not go to any place where someone is so envious of Sri Gurudev and slanders him. If by chance we hear the blasphemy of the Spiritual Master, we should block our ears, remember Sri Hari and leave that place. It is forbidden to associate with a person who blasphemes the Spiritual Master, to live with such a person or even to see his face.
- When we see Sri Gurudev arriving we should come forward and offer *sâshtânga dandavat* and when he leaves we should walk behind him.
- We must personally bring water for washing Sri Gurudev's feet and for bathing him.
- We must personally massage Sri Gurudev's body, bathe him, anoint him with unguents like sandalwood pulp, wash his clothes and massage his feet.
- We must personally clean and anoint Sri Gurudev's house or room, and his yard.
- We must take *prasâdam* only after offering it to Sri Gurudev.

We must always please Sri Gurudev in a simple and loving manner, with a saintly heart, with body, mind and speech. We should serve him with one's house, wealth and one's very life. A *sâdhak* who follows these rules and prohibitions in connection with Sri Gurudev will swiftly attain the ultimate result of Sri *Guru-sevâ,* that is, *prem-bhakti* for the lotus feet of *Sri Bhagavân* and thus become most blessed.

Points to be specially noted

Sripâd Baladev Vidyâbhushan has written in Sidhânta-Ratna –
"*Bhakti* is flowing from Sri Hari's eternal associates to the present day *sâdhaks* like the river Mandâkini. *Bhakti* is present in the eternal associates in the eternal abode forever and descends like river Mandâkini in this world through a channel of devotees."

This means that just as river Mandâkini arises from Sri *Bhagavân's* lotus feet, descends to the heavenly planets, earth and nether regions – *bhakti* (that is a characteristic of Sri *Bhagavân's* internal potency) too travels through the Guru-*paramparâ* and descends in the heart of a *sâdhak.* Similarly just as the river Mandâkini sanctifies the three worlds, *bhakti* too makes our heart pure. We can get the Guru-*pranâli* from a *sadguru.*

This *Kaliyug* is very special. Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has taken mercy and descended to give us the topmost *ras,* which is *Manjari-bhâv-sâdhanâ*. Sri *Bhagavân* had not offered this *kripâ* to humanity in any other *yug*. Those of us who wish to feel blessed by taking advantage of this mercy and start performing *Manjari-bhâv-sâdhanâ* must take *dikshâ* from a *sadguru* in Sri Goudiya-Vaishnav Paramparâ. He should obtain Sri Guru-*pranâli* and *siddha-pranâli* from the Spiritual Master and then perform *bhajan* under his guidance.

We have already mentioned that we can conquer easily all our *anarthas* by serving the Spiritual Master with devotion. Now let us learn how Sri *Bhagavân's* mercy descends on us. It flows through two channels –
1. Sri Vaishnav
2. Sri Gurudev

When we associate with the Vaishnavs we realize it is our foremost duty to take the shelter of Sri Gurudev and we gain a *sadguru* by the mercy of the Vaishnavs. The Vaishnavs are so merciful that they bring us in contact with the priceless treasure called 'Spiritual Master' who is the source of devotional practice. Therefore if we wish to attain *prem* we have to serve Sri Gurudev and the Vaishnavs equally. The Vaishnavs are embodiment of devotion, while Sri Gurudev is the incarnation of Sri *Bhagavân*; when both shower mercy on us we shall attain success in devotional practice. This is why Srila Narottam dâs Thâkur *Mahâ*shay has written –

"*châdiyâ baishnab sebâ, nistâr peyechhe kebâ,*
anukkhon khed uthe mone.
narottam dâse koy, jeebâr uchit noy,
sri guru-baishnab-sebâbine."

Meaning – "Who has ever got deliverance by not serving the Vaishnavs? He is always pricked by his guilty conscience. Narottam dâs says – we have no right to live if we do not serve Sri Gurudev and the Vaishnavs."

> If we serve Sri Gurudev and ignore the Vaishnavs then we are not serving the Spiritual Master perfectly and if we serve the Vaishnavs, yet we are not interested in the Spiritual Master then we cannot call it 'complete Vaishnav-*sevâ*'.

Therefore a *sadguru* surrenders his disciple at the Vaishnavs feet so that he associates with the Vaishnavs, serves them and gets their blessing. Similarly a good Vaishnav too instructs the devotee to serve the lotus feet of the Spiritual Master and get his mercy.
If a Spiritual Master is envious of great Vaishnavs and forbids his disciple to associate with him then the disciple should think that Sri Gurudev is testing me and he should approach the feet of his Gurudev and plead him to withdraw such an order. However still if the Spiritual Master continues to give such commands then the disciple should consider it his misfortune, take refuge of Sri *Bhagavân's* lotus feet and continue to worship his Spiritual Master from far. Under no

circumstance must he reject that Spiritual Master or misbehave with him. He should not slander him either. If the Spiritual Master really starts behaving in an un-Vaishnav like manner then the disciple can consider him a non-Vaishnav, reject him, take initiation again from a Vaishnav Gurudev and perform *bhajan* under his shelter. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has stated very clearly in Sri Bhakti-Sandarbha –

Sri Nârad-Pancharâtra says –"The one who speaks against the rules stated in the Vaishnav-scriptures and the one who hears such talk that is outside the rules stated therein – both perish in the hell for time infinite.

If the Spiritual Master's instruction is against the Vaishnav-scriptures then we ought to reject him and worship him from far. However if the Spiritual Master goes against the Vaishnavs or slanders the Vaishnavs it is better we forsake him altogether. 'Slandering' indicates the six types of Vaishnav offences. A Spiritual Master who commits Vaishnav-offence definitely is not worthy of being a Guru. Hence the rule states that we should reject him. If a Spiritual Master is materialistic, does not know the right from the wrong (what he should do and he should not do) and behaves contrary to the injunctions given in the Bhakti-*shâstras* then it is our duty to reject such a Spiritual Master for he is without a 'Vaishnav-*bhâv'* – so he is as good as a non-Vaishnav. Here is the rule - 'if we chant a *mantra* given by a non-Vaishnav, we shall perish in the hell' - becomes active.

We can forsake a Spiritual Master in the following cases –

- If he is envious of other Vaishnavs
- Conducts himself in an Un-Vaishnav like manner
- Has the wrong concept of God
- Preaches himself as God
- Is not interested in hearing and glorifying Sri Krishna's excellences
- Does not feel joy upon hearing the excellences of Sri Krishna
- Is intoxicated by the worship of the people since he has a massive false ego

Under the above circumstances it is our duty to reject him and take the shelter of a worthy Spiritual Master.

Sri-Bhakta-Tattva-Vigyaan

(A Scientific study of the devotee)

Who is a devotee?

A devotee is one who has devotion for God.

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has written – "The one whose innermost mind is full of Sri Krishna is a 'Krishna-devotee'."

Krishna-devotees are of two types –

- *Sâdhak* (a practicing devotee)
- *Siddha* (a devotee who has attained success in devotion)

"A *sâdhak* is one who has *rati* for Sri Krishna, yet all his *anarthas* are not completely destroyed and he is worthy of meeting Sri Krishna." – (B.R.S.2.1.276)

"A *siddha* is one who does not have any ignorance and illusion (no *anartha*), he is always engaged in activities pertaining only to Sri Krishna and he enjoys the bliss of Sri Krishna-*prem* uninterruptedly." – (B.R.S.2.1.280)

According to the characteristics of a devotee we can classify them also as –

- Best
- Medium
- Junior

Srimad-Bhâgavatam describes them further in the 11th *skandha* in the conversation with Nimi Yogindra.

Best Devotee

"The one who sees his beloved Sri *Bhagavân* in all conscious and non-conscious objects and feels the power of the love that he has for Sri *Bhagavân* in all elements is the best amongst the devotees." – (Krama-Sandarbha purport of Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd to S.B.11.2.45)

The best devotee is in different stages of devotion. When his love for Sri *Bhagavân* becomes very deep then he cannot differentiate between objects. All he can see is Sri *Bhagavân.* When his love is not so deep then although he can distinguish between various objects he sees the presence of Sri *Bhagavân* in them.

Srimad-Bhâgavatam cites some characteristics of the best devotee – let us mention some of them. Although this devotee senses beauty, taste etc. he sees the entire universe as full of Sri *Bhagavân* and hence he never feels stress and anxiety. He is the best of devotees. The one who does not feel miserable in birth, death, hunger, thirst, fearful situations and hard labor because he remembers Sri *Bhagavân* is also the best of devotees. The one who does not wish to commit *karma* and Sri Vâsudev is his only support – he is the best of devotees. The one who does not discriminate between his property and others', considers everyone equal, is impartial to all elements and he is calm – he alone is the best of devotees.

Bhakti-Sandarbha has classified the best devotees who have attained divine love into three types –

1. *murchhita kashây* – the one whose *kashây* (desire) has become *murchhita* (very faint) – e.g. King Bharat, Nârad Muni in the birth as a maid-servant's son.
2. *nirdhuta kashây* – the one who does not have the least desire – e.g.Shukadev Goswâmi
3. The one who has got the body of Sri *Bhagavân's* associate – e.g. Nârad Muni.

Again we may classify the best devotees into two types depending on their *prem*

1. ***Swarup-âdhikya*** (depends on which form of Sri *Bhagavân* he worships) - Sri Krishna is the origin of all other divine forms; therefore when a devotee loves Sri Krishna he is superior to the devotees who love any other divine form. On the basis of this classification, although Sri Bilwamangal Thâkur is in the *murchhita kashây* stage (this means, he still has some faint material desires) is greater than Sri Hanumân and Pundarik who have no material desire whatsoever.

The devotees of sweet *ras* are greater than the one worshiping in parental mood, and he is superior to the devotee in friendly mood that is greater than the devotee adoring Sri *Bhagavân* in the servile mood. Although a devotee in the sweet mood may be in *murchhita kashây* stage he is superior to the one who has become Sri *Bhagavân's* associate in the servile, friendly or parental mood.

"The deeper the mood closer he is to Sri *Bhagavân"*
– (B.S.187)

The devotee's status also depends on where he is serving. The servant of Dwârakâ has more love than the one in Vaikuntha. The servant of Mathurâ is greater than that, the one in Vrindâban is greater, the one in Govardhan is still greater and the loving devotee of Râdhâkund is the best.

2. ***Parimân-âdhikya*** (depends on the amount of love) – *Prem* increases from *sneha*, *mân, pranay*, *râg*, *anurâg* up to *Mahâbhâv*. Therefore the one who has reached the stage of *pranay –prem-bhakti* is superior to the one who has attained *sneha-prem-bhakti*. The devotees who have gain *Mahâbhâv* are the greatest since their *prem* is maximum. *Mahâbhâv* does not exist anywhere else other than Braja dhâm. Only the Gopis who are immersed in sweet *ras* have *Mahâbhâv*. They have monopoly over this treasure. Using this analysis we conclude that the maidservants who are sheltered at the feet of Sri Vrishabhânu-Nandini (the daughter of King Vrishabhânu) – Srimati Râdhârâni – are the greatest loving devotees.

Sri-Brihad-Bhâgavatâmritam has classified devotees in 5 types depending on their *bhâv* in ascending order of status (the next one is greater than the previous one)–

1. *gyân-bhakta* – e.g. Bharat
2. *shuddha-bhakta* – (pure devotee) – e.g. Ambarish
3. *prem-bhakta* – (loving devotee) – e.g. Hanumân
4. *prem-para-bhakta* – (very loving devotee) – e.g. Arjun and the Pandavs
5. *prem-âtur-bhakta* (loving and anxious devotee) – e.g. Uddhav and the other Yâdavs

Sri Brihad-Bhâgavatâmritam has categorically proved that each is superior to the previous. Sri Uddhav, who is the greatest of all devotees, has begged to be born as a grass or moss in Brajabhumi because he is craving for a speck of dust from the feet of the gopikâs. Sri Uddhav himself admits in Srimad-Bhâgavatam. When we get *bhakti* then certain special qualities arise in our body and mind – we should recognize them as the characteristics of a Vaishnav.

"A Vaishnav's body and mind have all good qualities since Sri Krishna's excellences get transmitted inside His devotee. We call these as the characteristics of a Vaishnav – they are so innumerable that we cannot count them." – (C.C.)

We should remember that not even one quality of Sri Krishna can get transmitted to anyone to the fullest extent. The devotee gets drops of these eminent qualities. Only Sri Krishna has them completely.

"A Vaishnav has the following qualities –

- Compassionate
- Is not inimical to anyone

- Truthful
- Impartial
- Faultless
- Magnanimous
- Soft-spoken
- Clean
- Without material possession
- Helpful
- Calm
- Sri Krishna is his only shelter
- Free of material desires
- Harmless
- Steadfast
- Has conquered the six enemies such as lust, anger etc.
- Eats less
- Not agitated
- Respectful to others
- Does not expect respect from others
- Serious
- Merciful
- Friendly
- Wise
- Expert
- Silent." – (C.C.)

A Vaishnav is also '*sâdhavo'dosha-darshinâh'* – does not see faults in others – this is also a great quality of the Vaishnav. This is possible for one who has become magnanimous by practicing the path of *bhakti*. This is the only characteristic that lets us distinguish between the great, greater, greatest and the perfect Vaishnav. Let us understand this with some examples.

A **great** devotee or '*sâdhu*' is one who does not see another's fault; rather he considers it a good quality. E.g. someone is harsh-spoken. A great devotee will consider it medicinal like *Neem*-juice. He will think that the harsh words are good for him since they help him to improve.

A **greater** devotee is one who cannot even realize that another person has any fault. He only sees the good qualities. E.g. a greater devotee saw a businessman entertaining his clients (to advance his business for his selfish purpose) and thought – "How this man loves guests and treat them well!"

The **greatest** devotee is one who never sees faults in others, but takes a small good quality as an excellence. E.g. a thief equipped with arms stole devotees clothes off his body. He thought – "This man is suffering from cold, so he has stolen my clothes. However he is very compassionate, since, in spite of being armed he has not shown violence. He is indeed blessed!"

A **perfect** Vaishnav is one who sees a good quality when there is none. He thinks, "There is no evil in this world at all, everything is good."

Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has called him the best devotee who can transmit *bhakti* in us just if we take his *darshan.*

The Lord said – "You are the best of *Mahâ*bhâgavats, since just by your *darshan* everyone's heart is purified." – (C.C.)

How does the best devotee feel?

"*Prem* makes the devotee laugh, cry and sing. He dances in delirium and runs helter-skelter. He sweats, shivers and is covered in goose bumps. His voice is choked and he turns pale. *Prem* makes a devotee dance in this manner and makes him float in the nectarine blissful ocean of Sri Krishna." - (C.C.)

Medium Devotee

In his Krama-Sandarbha purport of S.B.11.2.46, Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has cited the characteristics of a medium devotee as follows –
"He loves the Su*preme* Being, is passionate towards Him (has *rati*), is friendly towards all who are subjugated to Sri *Bhagavân*, is compassionate to the ones who do not practice *bhakti,* yet he is not envious towards Sri *Bhagavân* or his devotees and ignores the ones who are envious of him, of the devotees and of Sri *Bhagavân*."

These devotees are extremely merciful to the ignorant people – we can see from Sri Prahlâd *Mahâ*râj's prayer to Lord Nrisimha (s.B.7.9) –

Sri Prahlâd *Mahâ*shay told Lord Nrisimha – "My dear Lord, I grieve for the foolish people who are turned away from Your nectarine talks and are carrying the burden of materialism by giving in to sense gratification."

Hence we find that the medium devotee is compassionate to the foolish people who are disinterested in Bhagavad-*kathâ*, yet are not envious of Sri *Bhagavân* and His devotees. He ignores those who are jealous of him, since they do not agitate him. Rather because he is kind by nature, he considers him ignorant and shows him mercy. How compassionate was Prahlâd *Mahâ*shay to Hiranyakashipu although the latter tried to kill him! However the medium devotee never shows kindness to the ones who are envious of Sri *Bhagavân* and His devotees, since they agitate him. "The 'envious' also includes the ones who slander" – (B.S.)
The difference between medium and best devotee is that, the medium devotee feels compassionate towards the ignorant, while the best devotee is so full of divine love that he feels much friendlier towards the ignorant. The medium devotee is not interested in those who are envious towards the devotees and Sri *Bhagavân*, while the best devotee feels malevolence for such envious people. E.g. Sri Shukadev Goswâmi is calling Kamsa '*bhojânâm kulapâmshanah*' (S.B.10.1.35), meaning, "Kamsa is a blot on the fair name of the Bhoj family." Thus we find that even pure devotees such as Shukadev Goswâmi feel inimical towards those who are against the devotees and Sri *Bhagavân.*

You may ask, then how come we are saying that the great devotees see the divine being everywhere? The *Mahâ*jan answers –

"When the pure devotees see such envious people they get a *sphurti* of Sri *Bhagavân* as the One Who disciplines the wicked. Therefore we see pure devotees such as Sri Uddhav paying obeisance to people like Duryodhan. Here they are saluting their beloved Sri *Bhagavân* Who is in the form of the 'Punisher of the evil-doer'. We should realize that they are not paying obeisance to Duryodhan as such." – (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd in Krama-Sandarbha)

Earlier we have stated the pure devotees consider the faults in others as good qualities; however they do not do so in the case of those who are against the Vaishnavs and Sri *Bhagavân*.

Junior devotee

"The one, who worships Sri Hari's Deity with devotion, however does not adore His devotees, he is an ordinary devotee and we should realize that he has recently stepped into the realm of *bhajan*." – (S.B.11.2.47)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained the above statement in his Krama-Sandarbha purport as follows – "Although such devotees worship Sri *Bhagavân* faithfully, they do not love Him, and hence they do not know the importance of His devotees. They do not even know that Sri Hari resides in each and every devotee and are not aware that it is the characteristic of a devotee to respect every element. Actually their faith is not scriptural, since the Bhakti-scriptures do not instruct us only to worship to Sri *Bhagavân,* but that we should adore His devotees and respect every living being, knowing that Sri *Bhagavân* is present in it. Sri Krishna has told in the verse '*yayâtma-buddhih kunape'* (S.B.10.84.13) that – 'The one who considers this material body as his own, his wife and children as his dear ones, worships a Deity transformed from material elements, water bodies as holy places, yet does not feel nearness, love, adoration for the devotees – he is as stupid as cows and donkeys.' This is why such people are disinterested in worshiping the devotee and it is verily impossible for them to adore all living beings. Even the scriptures say that the one who worships Sri Govinda, yet does not worship His devotee is not a devotee at all, he is only arrogant.' He is like a devotee, not really a devotee."

Who is a real junior devotee?

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has defined a real junior devotee as follows – "A junior devotee is a *sâdhak* who has scriptural faith, yet does not have passion for Sri *Bhagavân*". This signifies that, since this devotee has scriptural faith he has the desire and courage to behave according to the Bhakti-scriptures. Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has stated the characteristics of a Vaishnav, medium Vaishnav and a best Vaishnav as follows –

"Then Râmânanda Roy and Satyarâj Khân requested the Lord humbly – 'I am but a materialistic householder, please instruct me how to practice *bhakti.* I shall be grateful if You give some command with Your holy lips.'

The Lord said – 'Serve Sri Krishna and the Vaishnavs and constantly chant the Holy Name.'

Satyarâj asked – 'How shall I recognize a Vaishnav? Please tell me the common characteristics of a Vaishnav.'

The Lord answered, 'When we hear the Holy Name of Sri Krishna even once from someone's mouth – we should worship him for he is the greatest of all.'

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The villagers of Kulin requested as they had previously done – 'Dear Lord, please order us how we should execute devotional practice?'

The Lord answered, 'Serve the Vaishnavs and chant the Holy Name – simply do these two things and you will attain the lotus feet of Sri Krishna very soon.'

They asked, 'Who is a Vaishnav? What are his characteristics?'

The Lord laughed for He understood what they wanted to say; He replied – 'the one who always chants the Holy Name of Sri Krishna is the best of Vaishnavs; always worship his feet.' After a year when they repeated the question the Lord taught them how to distinguish between Vaishnavs. He said – 'when you see a Vaishnav and the Holy Name automatically appears on your lips – know him to be the best of Vaishnavs. In this manner the Lord expressed the characteristics of a Vaishnav and distinguished between ordinary, medium and the best Vaishnav." – (C.C.)

Sri Krishna told Sri Arjun in the Holy Gitâ –

"yo mad-bhaktah sa me priyah"

Meaning - "My devotee alone is dear to me."

This indicates that whoever is dearer to Sri Krishna is a greater devotee – undoubtedly. Sri Krishna has mentioned in verses such as "*adweshtâ sarva-bhutânâm"* (B.G.12.13-19) the qualities of the devotees who are loyal to Him. Then He has stated the result of hearing, reading and pondering on all those qualities as follows – "*ye tu dharmâmritam-idam yathoktam paryupâsate, shraddadhânâ matparamâ bhaktâste'teeva me priyâh"* -(B.G.12.20)

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained this verse as follows - "O Arjun, I have earlier mentioned various qualities of the different devotees, however those *siddha* devotees have attained perfection in a certain quality, meaning, someone is without any negative disposition towards any element, someone is friendly towards all etc. The *sâdhaks* who desire the qualities of all those devotees and love me with faith and practice the path of *dharma* that I have preached (that is, hear, read, ponder) – they are very much dear to me. Although they are *sâdhaks*, they are greater than the *siddhas* who have perfected in one quality since they desire all the qualities of the *siddhas*. This is what '*ateeva*' in the verse signifies."

Who is the dearest to Sri Krishna in the universe? The Lord has Himself stated at the end of Sri Gitâ – "Dear Arjun, The one who instructs this most confidential teaching to my devotees will attain su*preme* devotion and obtain me. In humankind there is none who was dearer to me, none is dearer now, nor will there be in the future." – (B.G.18.68 – 69)

So now we know that the instructions in the *bhakti-shâstras* are the dearest to Sri *Bhagavân* and no means is higher than hearing them. Those who make us relish the *ras* of the *bhakti-shâstras* to the devotees they are the dearest to Sri *Bhagavân.* They are indeed blessed for they have the most excellent quality. In fact relishing the *ras* of the scriptures is the life-air for a devotee. However we should hear from the ones who are satisfied with what ever they get, selfless, surrendered and behave like a devotee. Although one may peach the *bhakti-shâstras* he can never be dear to Sri *Bhagavân* if he does not possess the good qualities of a devotee – we should realize this fact. Srimad-Bhâgavatam states the characteristics of a *Paramahamsa* devotee as follows –

"*yâtrânuraktâh sahasaiva dheera vyapohya dehâdishu sangamudham,*
Brajanti tatpâramahamsyamantyam yasminnahimsopashamah swadharma."
\- (S.B.1.18.22)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd explains this verse in his Krama-Sandarbha as follows –

"The devotee who loves Sri *Bhagavân* deeply forsakes all material attachment and ascends to the status of a Bhâgavat-*Paramahamsa*. When we reach this stage we are devoid of jealousy etc and we become stead fast in Sri *Bhagavân."*

Sri Krishna has told Sri Uddhav –
"My devotees have true spiritual knowledge, they are entirely detached and do not expect even liberation, definitely not power and position, he shows the characteristics of *bhâv*, transcends the *varnâshram dharma* established in the scriptures. Hence he is beyond the scriptural injunctions."

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained further –
"Although these devotees transcend scriptural injunctions they are extremely pure-hearted, therefore they never indulge in activities frowned upon by the scriptures – such as, slandering others, harming others, seducing others' wife, stealing, telling lies and jealousy. They do not possess the tendency towards such activities. The devotee who has attained *prem* forsakes the prescribed duties of the particular *âshram* while the devotee who has not attained *prem* continues to follow the rules of the *âshram*, yet within his heart he does not consider himself part of any *âshram* – hence he too is detached from *âshram*."

"A Krishna-devotee forsakes all – even the *varnâshram dharma*; he become free of all possessions and only seeks the refuge of Sri Krishna." – (C.C.)

"A Krishna-devotee forsakes the rules prescribed in the scriptures and adores Sri Krishna's lotus feet. However he never feels like committing the activities forbidden in the scriptures."
– (C.C.)

The devotees who analyze good and bad qualities of a person and accept them as such – we call them 'ordinary great devotees'. They can distinguish the good from the bad using the rules prescribed in the scriptures. We can also call them '*sadâchâr* devotees' – (B.s.201). We should associate with such devotees because they are the best for fallen souls such as myself. They will pick out and analyze my good and bad qualities, then they will instruct me how to get rid of my faults and if I do not obey them, they will chastise me – this is also their *kripâ*. Those devotees who consider even the fallen souls as excellent and consider themselves as lower than a blade of grass – they are *Mahâ*bhâgavats. However they do not always feel compassion for sinners such as me. I am unable to understand in which situation and when they feel merciful to the living beings. Therefore it is best to associate with ordinary great devotees.

Association with devotees and their *kripâ* are the only means to obtain *bhakti*

All the scriptures unanimously extol the greatness of associating with devotees. Since time infinite we have been bound by illusion. Due to this we have been wandering in 64 lakhs species[1] and materialism is carrying us towards destruction. The only way by which we can be saved from this doom is the association of devotees. It will ultimately reach us to the lotus feet of Sri *Bhagavân.* Association with devotees and their blessing alone can redeem us from this terrible fate.

"There is no way we can get *bhakti* without the mercy of great devotees; forget attaining Sri Krishna, without it we cannot even transcend the material ocean." – (C.C.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has proved point by point in his Sri Bhakti-Sandarbha how we cannot turn towards the lotus feet of Sri *Bhagavân* since our heart is wicked since time infinite, it is steeped in material desires and it needs to become clean before it can develop any spiritual interest. He has written –

"Although Sri *Bhagavân's kripâ* is necessary for us to turn to Sri *Bhagavân*, it is not so important. This is because the ones who are turned away from Sri *Bhagavân* are burning in the scorching fire of materialism so much that it is indeed impossible for divine mercy to independently fall on them. Mercy is a characteristic of the heart. When our sorrow touches the heart of a compassionate person, he feels mercy. Sri *Bhagavân* is eternally joyful. He is the embodiment of su*preme* bliss and *ras.* The sun is so brilliant that darkness can never touch it. Similarly we are suffering from false sorrows arising out of ignorance and illusion – hence our sadness can never touch the heart of ever-blissful Sri Hari. It is just impossible. Therefore although Sri *Bhagavân* is an ocean of mercy and He is capable of everything, the ones who are turned away from Him do not find relief from their suffering. Hence only the great devotees can redeem them, for their mercy is aroused when they see the suffering of the fallen souls. This is the greatest difference between Sri *Bhagavân* and His devotees.
It is true that the great devotees too do not feel the materialistic sorrow arising out of illusion and ignorance, yet one who is awake wishes to wake up a sleeping man who is tossing and turning due to a nightmare, the great devotee has arisen from the sleep of illusion and now he wishes to awaken the materialists who are enduring the agony of the nightmarish material sorrow. Hence we see that the great devotees carry Sri *Bhagavân's kripâ* and transmit it into the living beings – divine mercy does not travel independently." – (B.S.180)
Even ordinary *devatâs* and *devis* do not travel without a vehicle, then how can we expect the crest jewel of all *shaktis* – Bhagavad-*kripâ* – divine mercy to travel without one?[2]

[1] Taking birth in 64 lakhs various forms of life.
[2] Divine mercy uses the great devotee's heart as a vehicle or we can say that she rides on a vehicle called '*bhakta-sanga'* and enters in our heart.

Srila Muchukunda extolled Lord Krishna –

"bhavâpavargo bhramato sada bhavejjanasya tarhyachyuta-sat-samagamâh,
satsangamoyarhi tadeva sadgatou parâvareshe twayi jâyate matih."

Meaning - "My dear Lord, the living being wanders in the cycle of birth and death; when his material condition is about to end, he comes in contact with Your devotees. And then they get interested in You who are the sole refuge of the devotees."

Actually when we keep the company of the devotees our material condition comes to an end – and not the reverse. However King Muchukunda is stating 'material condition is about to end' before 'comes in contact with Your devotees' – this indicates that contact with devotees is so powerful and grants instantaneous result that you cannot make out what happened first – you came in contact with devotees or your material suffering got mitigated. The rhetoricians call this sort of statement as a figure of speech – 'the fourth type of hyperbole'. They say –

"*chaturthi sâ kâranasya gaditum sheeghra kârya-kâritâm yâ hi kâryasya purvoktih".*

Meaning – "When one wants to show how fast an action results into a reaction, one states the reaction before the action; we call this the fourth type of hyperbole."

Here another point to be noted is that destroying the material suffering is not the chief effect of *bhakta-sanga* (association with devotees). Its main consequence is to make us attain *bhakti* at the lotus feet of Sri *Bhagavân*. Ending the material suffering is only a bye-product. The main use of the sun is – it gives us light; that it also mitigates darkness is a secondary consequence. Similarly *bhakta-sanga* transmits *bhakti* in us, while destruction of ignorance and sorrow is the secondary effect.

Sri Krishna told Sri Nal-kuvar and Manigreev – "My devotee is impartial to all and has surrendered his heart unto me; when a living being beholds such a devotee then his material bondage is broken, just as the sunrise annihilates darkness." - (S.B.10.10.41)

Therefore, as soon as we associate with a devotee it certain that passion for Sri Hari will arise in us (this is the chief outcome) and along side it will break our material bondage – the secondary effect.

We may question – in most cases why do we not experience such colossal impact of *bhakta-sanga*? We do associate with devotees, and yet why we continue to turn away from Sri *Bhagavân* and we do not realize any passion for Him? Srimad-Bhâgavatam answers this question – this happens only in the case of offensive people. If we are inoffensive, then most certainly this effect will occur. The devotees do not wish to shower mercy on offensive people although they may associate with them –

"O Urugâya, O Paresh, the ones who have dishonest tendency or are offensive – they are turned away from you. Your devotees who are steadfast on Your lotus feet surely do not wish to glance at them." – (S.B.3.5.44)

This proves that Sri *Bhagavân's* devotees do not shower *kripâ* on offensive materialists. Here 'dishonest tendency' does not refer to materialistic characteristics alone, for until we get the *kripâ* of devotees, all of us are materialists. Hence 'dishonest tendency' indicates 'offensive' since ordinary materialists attract the devotees' *kripâ.* For example –

Sri Vidur *Mahâ*shay told Srila Maitreya Rishi – 'O master, the ones who are turned away from Sri Krishna are suffering immensely since their past *karma* forces them to behave unrighteously. Sri Krishna's auspicious devotees such as you have appeared on earth to shower mercy on such materialists." – (S.B.3.5.3)

Therefore if anybody is inoffensive and has just one fault – that is – he is turned away from Sri *Bhagavân* – then as soon as he associates with devotees, he is rid of that shortcoming and he is interested in Sri *Bhagavân.* If one who is offensive and has turned away from Sri *Bhagavân,* then by merely associating with devotees he will not become interested in Sri *Bhagavân*.

Simply associating with devotees will not make an offensive materialist turn towards Sri Krishna – the great devotee has to feel compassion for him.

However if they can attract the *kripâ* of some very great soul then it is possible that his merciful glance will rid them of offenses and make them worship the lotus feet of Sri Hari. When an inoffensive materialist comes in contact with a great devotee, even though he may not consider him great and the great devotee does not think 'he is fallen, let me take mercy on him' – just the association will make the materialist worship Sri *Bhagavân*. However when a great devotee comes in contact with an offensive person, if he does not consider his offenses and simply showers *kripâ* on him just because he is munificent, then it is possible that he turns to Sri *Bhagavân.*

We can understand this fact better with the example of Sri Nal-kuvar and Manigreev and the ordinary *devatâs*. We see that Sri Nal-kuvar and Manigreev had offended Devarshi Nârad by disregarding him; however the great sage did not consider their offense and in stead cast his merciful glance on them. The result was that they got to live in Vrindâban inoffensively with the memory of their past life intact, got *darshan* of Sri Bâl-Gopâl and attained steadfast *bhakti* at His lotus feet. On the other hand we find that the *devatâs* who do not have respect for great devotees see Devarshi Nârad repeatedly yet do not get devotion for Sri Hari. They do pray to Sri Krishna from time to time – however it is in their self-interest. If Sri Krishna does anything that is not in their material interest then they do not lose the chance to turn against Him. We know very well what Indra did when Sri Krishna stopped the Brijwâsis from worshiping him – this incident in Srimad-Bhâgavatam is a burning testimony of this fact.

Still we have one doubt regarding this principle that – in his prayer Sri Prahlâd *Mahâ*shay told Lord Nrisimha -

"naitân vihâya kripanân vimumukshu eko nânayam twadasya sharanam bhramato'nupashye"

Meaning - "My dear Lord, the living beings are suffering in the cycle of birth and death in this material ocean – I do not wish to forsake them and desire liberation for myself. These materialists are without any shelter and I see no compassionate person other than You who is capable of protecting them."

Then although Sri Prahlâd is so merciful towards all living beings how come they are continuing to suffer?

The answer is that, living beings are innumerable and Sri Prahlâd *Mahâ*shay did not consider all of them. He has prayed to Lord Nrisimha about those whose suffering he has seen or heard, and it is certain they have been delivered. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd who is a friend of all *jivas* (living beings) is positive about this.

Brahmarshi Bharat has clearly declared to King Rahugan that there is no other way to gain divine knowledge without serving (consuming, revering) the dust of the holy feet of the great devotees – "O *Mahâ*râj Rahugan, unless and until we bathe in the dust of the holy feet of the great devotees – we cannot gain knowledge about the divine truth by any other means, such as – austerity, Vedic rituals, food-distribution, building shelter for refugees, Vedic study, worshiping the water, fire or the sun." – (S.B.5.12.12)

Srila Prahlâd *Mahâ*shay too has prescribed worshiping the dust of the holy feet of the great devotees as the 'sure-shot' means to turn towards Sri *Bhagavân* -

"Unless and until we bathe in the dust of the feet of the devotees who are free of material desire our mind cannot touch the lotus feet of Sri *Bhagavân.* When we turn towards Sri Krishna all our bad qualities get destroyed." – (S.B.7.5.2)

"bhakta-pada-dhooli âr bhakta-pada-jal,
bhakta-bhukta-abashesh – tin mohâbol."

Meaning - "The dust of the devotee's feet, the foot-wash of the devotee and the remnants of the devotee's *prasâdam* - these three are enormously invigorating." – (C.C.)

Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita continues – "These three grant us Sri Krishna-*prem*. All the scriptures cry out repeatedly and hence I am telling you again and again – Hear O devotees! worship these three with full confidence and you will experience the ecstasy of Sri Krishna-*nâm* and Sri Krishna-*prem*. Devotee Kâlidâs is an evidence of the miracle of Sri Krishna-*prasâdam."* – (C.C.)

Srila Kâlidâs Roy had immense faith in the *charanâmrita*[1] and *adharâmrita*[2] of the devotees. He was a rare fortunate soul who gained Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu's *kripâ* in Neelâchal.[3] Srila Narottam dâs Thâkur *Mahâ*shay has said –

"baishnaber pada-jal krishna-bhakti dite bol,
âr keho nohe balabanta."

Meaning - "No one is as powerful as to give the mighty Sri Krishna-*prem* other than the foot wash of the Vaishnav."

"baishnaber uchchhishta, tâhe mor mon nishthâ,
baishnaber nâmete ullâs."

Meaning - "My heart is faithfully absorbed in the remnant of the food partaken by the Vaishnav and I am ecstatic to hear and glorify the Holy Name of the Vaishnavs."

"bhagavad-bhakta-pâdâbja-pâdukâbhyo namo'stu me,
yat-sangamah sâdhanancha sâdhyanchâkhilam-uttamam."

Meaning - "Association of the devotees is the topmost achievable goal and also the means to achieve the goal – I pay obeisance to the lotus feet and even to the shoes of such devotees of Sri *Bhagavân*."

Associating with one devotee = Innumerable lifetime achievements

Srimad-Bhâgavatam says – "Lord Agni (the fire-god) shatters darkness, cold and fear; likewise the shelter of devotees destroy the outcomes of *karma,* fear of material bondage, and the obstacles on the path of *bhajan*." – (S.B.11.26.31)

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained this verse as follows –

"When we light the fire for cooking, the natural outcome (though we do not intend it – the real intention of lighting the fire is to cook) is that it dissipates darkness, fear and cold. Similarly if we associate with devotees to do better *bhajan* or to gain *prem* – we naturally break the bondage of *karma*, dispel worldly fear and obstacles in *bhajan*."

The association of devotees is more glorious than all the Holy places put together.

"The one who associates with devotees is greater than the one who bathes with reverence in the Gangâ." – (Padma Purân)

[1] The nectarine foot wash
[2] The nectarine remnant of the *prasâdam*
[3] Please read the 16th chapter of C.C. Antya Leelâ.

Associating with devotees is greater than all pious activities.

"When you have bathed in the peaceful, serene, Gangâ-like association of the devotees, why do you need to perform charity, visit Holy places, *tapasyâ* and sacrifice?" – (Padma Purân)

Bhakta-sanga brings su*preme* joy and adds meaning to life during difficult times.

"When we are separated from friends our heart and home is empty, wise devotees make our lives meaningful, death attains immortality[1] and hard times appear like great bounty." -(Vashishtha Purân)

Bhakta-sanga makes us forget the body and its pleasures.

"Dear Kamal-nâbh[2], the devotees' hearts are extremely tempted by the fragrance of Your lotus feet; the ones who associate with such devotees do not remember this body which is otherwise so precious for worldly men and they never think of objects related to the body either, such as, home, property, friends, children and spouse."
– (S.B.4.9.12)

Bhakta-sanga makes the universe happy.

"The shelter of Vaishnavs is like the moonlight that is su*prem*ely blissful. It destroys all type of illness and suffering. Whom does it not please?" (Padma Purân)

Bhakta-sanga is the essence of everything.

"O son of Brahmâ, nothing in this world has any meaning; however for the ones who wish to perform Sri Hari-*bhakti* – for them *bhakta-sanga* alone is meaningful (the best *sâdhanâ*)." – (Brihan-Nâradiya Purân)

Bhakta-sanga is the only reason why we should drink the nectar of divine discourses.

Sage Nârad told King Prâchinbarhi – "O King, when serene and pure devotees of Sri *Bhagavân* gather eagerly to hear His excellences, in that august association, the glory of Lord Madhusudan flows like condensed *Amritam* from the lips of the great devotees. Those who listen attentively to that nectarine divine talk in a mood devoid of material desires, no material suffering – such as – hunger, thirst, fear, sorrow and illusion can pose an obstacle in their path."- (S.B.4.29.40-41)

Srila Sanâtan Goswâmipâd has explained this verse from Srimad-Bhâgavatam as follows –
"If we try to hear Sri Hari-*kathâ* alone then we feel bored and lazy. We lack the quality of being absorbed in *ras* and hence we are easily overwhelmed by hunger and thirst. However when we hear the nectarine divine discourses in the association of the devotees, *bhakti* comes naturally to us."

Bhakta-sanga naturally arouses *bhakti*.

Brihan-Nâradiya Purân says –
"The association of the devotees arouses *bhakti* in us; the one who has past *sukriti* alone has the good fortune of *bhakta-sanga*."

Bhakta-sanga verily subjugates Sri *Bhagavân*.

Sri *Bhagavân* told Sri Uddhav – "O scion of the Yadu clan, hear this most confidential truth. Since you are my servant, well-wisher and friend, I shall reveal the topmost secret to you. *Ashtânga* yog, *sânkhya*, non-violence, *varnâshram-dharma,* Vedic study, austerity, renunciation, sacrifices such as Agnishtom, welfare activities such as digging wells, alms-giving, vows such as Ekâdashi, worshiping the *devatâs,* chanting the secret *mantras*, serving the Holy places, controlling the internal and external senses – nothing can subjugate me like *bhakta-sanga*, for it breaks all material attachments."

[1] If someone dies in the company of devotees, he attains the lotus feet of Sri *Bhagavân.*
[2] The One Whose navel is shaped like a lotus petal, Sri *Bhagavân.*

– (S.B.11.12.1-2)

The association of devotees is the su*preme* goal.

The sages such as Shounak told Sri Suta – "Dear Suta, we do not compare the heaven and not even *moksha* with a trace of *bhakta-sanga*, hence what to speak of worldly treasures desired by ordinary mortals?"
– (S.B.1.18.13)

This is why Srimad-Bhâgavatam says – "The association of devotees is the greatest blessing to mankind." – (S.B.12.10.7)

The scriptures and *Mahâ*jans conclude that *prem* and Sri *Bhagavân's sevâ* are the greatest achievements of human life. The association of devotees is the means to achieve that topmost goal – *prem*. Then why are we calling *bhakta-sanga* the topmost goal? Valid question. The answer is that – the association of devotees results in *bhakti,* associating with devotees is synonymous with practicing *bhakti* and the result of *bhakti* is also the association of devotees. *Prem* alone can make Sri Krishna subordinate to us and the Lord is saying that associating with devotees can subjugate Him – this means that *prem* is equal to *bhakta-sanga.*

If we associate carefully and nicely with devotees, we can easily attain *prem* for Sri *Bhagavân's* lotus feet and become blessed.

Lord Sri Kapildev told His mother Devahuti –"Dear mother, true association of devotee's results in the discussion of my glory that is extremely pleasurable to the ear and the heart. If one hears and ponders upon such talk with love then it mitigates all his material suffering and gradually arouses respect, passion and *prem* for me." – (S.B.3.25.24)

Here 'true' association indicates complete surrender to the devotees - with body, mind and speech. This means we should serve the devotees with our body, with mind we should have faith in them and their instructions and by speech we should glorify them. We should follow their ideal and perform *bhajan* according to their instructions. This is 'true' *bhakta-sanga* – it is not enough simply to approach them and live in their proximity.

Even after gaining *bhakti bhakta-sanga* is necessary to relish *ras.* Srimati Râdhârâni has written in Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu -

"We should relish the *ras* of divine talks in the company of the devotees who are in the same mood as we, they should be serene, on higher level of *bhakti* than we are and they should be connoisseurs of *ras*." – (B.R.S. 1.2.91)

Devotional practice has many classifications; hence it is necessary we keep the company of only *sajâtiya*[1] devotees. Also we must associate with only those devotees who are higher in *bhakti* than we are and he should be compassionate and serene. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has mentioned *'sajâtiyâshay'* to signify that the devotee whose company we keep should be of the same mood as we are, so that we can relish *ras* nicely, and the word 'swato vara' indicates that the company of such great devotees arouses *bhakti-ras* in us. When we take *darshan* of such great souls, touch them, speak to them and discuss Sri *Bhagavân* with them, then the passion in us is quickly transformed into *ras* and it becomes highly enjoyable.

Importance of serving the devotees

All the *shâstras* and saints loudly proclaim with the accompaniment of kettle-drums the great glory of serving the devotees. Sri Vidur *Mahâ*shay has told Maitreya Muni in Srimad-

[1] Devotees practicing *bhakti* in the same mood as we are – e.g. parental mood, friendly mood, Manjari-swarup etc.

Bhâgavatam - "O sage, by serving the devotees we get the highly delectable love for the lotus feet of Lord Madhusudan that is eternal and saves us from material sufferings." – (S.B.3.7.19)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this statement in Bhakti-Sandarbha (2.44) as follows – "'*Sevâ* is of two types –

- *Paricharyâ* – to please a Vaishnav by offering money, food and massaging the feet.
- *Prasangâ* – to make a Vaishnav hear Sri Hari-*kathâ* and *Harinâm.*

Of the two *sevâ, paricharyâ i*s greater since we can quickly attain divine *prem* by resorting to this *sevâ.* Sri *Bhagavân* has told Uddhav – '*mad-bhakta-pujâbhy-adhikâ'* - I am more pleased when you worship my devotee. When we worship the Vaishnav we should do so considering him or her as an appearance of Lord Vishnu. Beware! Even though the Vaishnav may belong to a lower class or of ill nature, he is worthy of our adoration. Under no circumstance must we ever disregard a Vaishnav who adorns *tilak* and *Tulsi,* for it is an offence.

> When we serve – we should not consider the community, race and nature of a Vaishnav – however when we associate then we should make certain that we keep the company of only *sadâchâri* and good Vaishnavs. The scriptures instruct us not to associate with ill-natured Vaishnavs.

Sri Rishabhdev instructed his sons in Srimad-Bhâgavatam –
"The association of great devotees is the door to gain *prem-bhakti*, while the company of womanizers is the gateway of hell."

We see in Padma Purân –
Lord *Mahâ*dev said – "Dear *devi*! Worshipping Sri Vishnu is greater than worshiping all *devatâs*, but worshiping the Vaishnav is even greater than that."

"tasmâd-vishnu-prasâdâya vaishnavân paritoshayet"

Meaning - "If we wish to please Lord Vishnu we have to please the Vaishnavs in all respect."
– (Itihâs-samuchchay)

Sri Chaitanya-Bhâgabat says –

"krishna-sebâ hoite baishnab-sebâ bodo,
bhâgabat âdi sob shâstre koilo dadha.
eteko baishnab-sebâ parom upây,
bhakta-sebâ hoite shobâi krishna pay."

Meaning - "Serving the Vaishnav is greater than serving Sri Krishna - this is the firm conclusion of Srimad-Bhâgavatam and other scriptures. Hence serving the Vaishnav is the best way to please Sri Krishna and everyone can attain Sri Krishna by resorting to Vaishnav-*sevâ."*

krishna-bhojibâr jâr âchhe abhilâsh,
se bhojuk krishner mangal nija dâs.
shobâre shikhây gourchandra-bhagabâne,
baishnaber sebâ prabhu koriyâ âpone."

Meaning - "Whoever wishes to worship Sri Krishna should worship his devotees who are auspicious. *Bhagavân* Sri Gourchandra teaches everyone by serving the Vaishnavs with His own hands." – (Sri Chaitanya-Bhâgabat)

In spite of being *Swayam Bhagavân*, Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has instructed all humankind the wonderful outcome of *bhakta-sevâ* by serving His devotees Himself. Srila Vrindâban dâs Thâkur says –

"ningâroye bastra kâro koriyâ jotone,
dhuti-bastra tuli kâro den to âpone.
kush, gangâ-mrittikâ kâhâro den kore,

sâji bohi konodin chole kâro ghare.
sakal baishnabgon hây hây kore,
ki koro ki koro ! tobu kore bishwambhare."

Meaning - "The Lord either squeezed someone's clothes (after they were washed) or picked up and gave another's dhoti and shirt. Sometimes He would place *kush* (a type of grass used for worshiping) and the earth of Gangâ and at other times He would carry a devotee's flower-casket to his room. All the Vaishnavs would protest and lament – Alas! Alas! What are You doing? – They would ask. Yet Lord Vishwambhar (Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu) would not listen and continue to serve the devotees." – (Sri Chaitanya-Bhâgabat)

The Lord has clarified why He was serving His devotees –

"*tomrâ se pâro krishna-bhajan dibâre,*
dâsere sebile krishna anugraha kore."

Meaning - "You are devotees – so you can give me Sri Krishna-*bhajan.* When one serves Sri Krishna's servant then He shows mercy on one."

"*tomâ sobâ sebile se krishna-bhakti pâi."*

Meaning - "By serving all of you I can get Sri Krishna-*bhakti."*

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has written in Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu –
"We have described here some topics of Bhagavad-*bhakti*; however the wise know that majority of them pertain to worshiping the devotees." – (B.R.S. 1.2.219)

We may ask – "The scriptures and saints are instructing us to serve the Vaishnavs – how shall we execute this order? We can worship Sri *Bhagavân* by hearing, glorifying etc. But how will we express adoration for the Vaishnavs?"
Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd replies to this question – "We have stated that hearing, glorifying, meditating etc. are means of worshiping Sri *Bhagavân*; majority of them are the means to adore Vaishnavs as well. For example, hearing the names and excellences of the Vaishnavs, glorifying them, performing *archanam,* praying to them, taking their *darshan,* paying obeisance and doing *parikramâ* with faith and reverence. This is because when we express devotion for the Vaishnavs we are showing our love for Sri Krishna. Sri Nârad-Pancharâtra gives the topmost instruction when it says – "*vaishnavânâm parâbhakti"* – practice su*preme* devotion to the Vaishnavs."

Sri Bhagavad-Tattva-Vigyaan

(A Scientific study of God)

Who is a devotee?

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has stated in the third chapter of Sri Bhagavat-Sandarbha –

"There is an absolute Mass of Bliss Who has an inherent power. He has inexpressible qualities and He is the origin of all divine powers. His intrinsic power comprises of sub-powers. '*Hlâdini Shakti*' or the Power of Bliss is the chief sub-power. *Hlâdini Shakti* has a special property – devotion or *bhakti*.

There are sages situated in extremely high spiritual position, so much so, that they have realized Brahman. When they experience this Mass of Bliss, they get *bhakti* in their heart. Their internal and external senses are drenched with *bhakti*. Then *bhakti* manifests to them that su*preme* *Shakti* (Mass of Bliss). He appears as the Hero of various *leelâs* with a multitude of capabilities. This is *Bhagavân* or God."

In simple terms, Sri *Bhagavân* is a transcendental *Tattva* and has all the powers to the fullest extent. Therefore, we conclude that –

"Sri *Bhagavân* has all the powers – material or spiritual." – (B.S.17th chapter)

The Vaishnav-Toshani purport of Srimad-Bhâgavatam (10.12.11) has stated as follows –
"*Bhagavân* is someone Who comprises of extraordinary *swarup*, majesty and sweetness. *Swarup* means 'su*preme* bliss', majesty refers to unparalleled and infinite lordship and sweetness implies unmatched, all-captivating natural beauty, excellence and *leelâs*."

In other words – Sri *Bhagavân* is a supernatural *Tattva* that is eternal, conscious and blissful. He has absolute sovereignty and beauty. No one has equal or more su*prem*acy than He does, no body can compare with Him in all-mesmerizing looks and excellences, and neither can anyone match Him in beautiful *leelâs*. Such is Sri *Bhagavân*.

Shruti and Upanishads mention often that the Su*preme* Brahman is eternal, conscious and blissful (*sat-chit-ânanda*).

"The Su*preme* Being is *sat-chit-ânanda*." – (Nri Purva 1.6)
"(*Sri Bhagavân* says) - I am absolute and *sat-chit-ânanda*." – (Maitri.3.12)
"The Su*preme* One is Truth, conscious and eternal." – (Taittiriya Upanishad[1].2.1.1)
"Verily know the Su*preme* One to be bliss." - (Brihad-Âranyak Upanishad[2].2.9.28)
"We know for sure that the Su*preme* One is bliss." – (Taittiriya Upanishad.2.6.1.)

Shrutis often repeat that Parabrahman is extremely majestic. He is all knowing, the ultimate decision-maker, the Great Controller, colossal – the sun, moon and all heavenly bodies move by His command. All universes are resplendent with His almighty existence.

"*ishâvâsyam idam sarvam*" – "Everything belongs to God."

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[1] The Taittiriya Upanishad forms the seventh, eighth and ninth chapters of the Taittiriya Âranyak of the Krishna Yajur Ved. These chapters are known as Shikshâ Valli, Ânanda Valli and Bhrigu Valli, respectively.

[2] It is widely known for its philosophical statements, and is ascribed to Rishi Yâgnavalkya. Its name is literally translated as "great-forest-book". It includes three sections, namely, *Madhu Kanda*, *Muni Kanda* (or *Yâgnavalkya Kanda*) and *Khila Kanda*. The Madhu Kanda explains the teachings of the basic identity of the individual or *jiva* and the Atman. Muni Kanda includes the conversations between the sage Yâgnavalkya and his wife, Maitreyi. Various methods of worship and meditation are dealt in the Khila Kanda.

"sarvasya prabhum ishânam sarvasya sharanam brihat." –"God is the Master of everything and That Almighty One Is the shelter of all."

"esha sarvashwara eshah sarvagnyah esho'ntaryâmi" – "God is Almighty, He is all-knowing, and omniscient."

'vashi sarvasya lokasya sthâvarasya charasya cha' – "God is the controller of everything – moving and non-moving."

Sage Yagnavalkya[1] told Gârgi –
"*etasya vâ aksharasya prashâsane gârgi surya-chandramasou vidhritou toshthat, etasya vâ aksharasya prashâsane gârgi dyâvâ prithivyou vidhrite tishthata."* – "O Gârgi, That One Being controls the sun and the moon, as well as the earth."

Sri Gitâ too says – *"shashi-surya-netram"* – "The sun and the moon are His eyes."

Sri *Bhagavân* is so magnificent that even He is incapable of describing His majesty, so He is telling Arjun - "Everything that is magnificent, rich and powerful – know it to be a part of my potency."
– (B.G.10.41)
The material universe comprises of just one part of the Lord's majesty while the remaining three-fourth is in the divine world. We see in the Chhândogya Upanishad – "Where does Sri *Bhagavân* reside? He resides in His infinite glory."

The Vedas and Upanishads also tell us about Sri *Bhagavân's* sweetness. The Aryan *rishis* worshiped Sri *Bhagavân* intensely; therefore, they realized the entire creation as an expression of the Lord's sweetness. The *mantra* "*madhuvâtâ ritâyate madhuksharanti sindhava"* of the Rig Ved says –

"The breeze is laden with sweet fragrance; the seas ooze sweetness, the plants, the days and nights and the earth are all sweet."

They must have relished someone Who is extraordinarily sweet and full of *ras* – otherwise they would not have made a statement that expresses such a sweet *bhâv.*
Madhuvidyâ of Brihad-Âranyak says – "*Paramâtmâ* Sri *Bhagavân* is the sweetness in everything."

Sri *Bhagavân* is absolute; He is naturally majestic and sweet. He is the ocean of *sachchidânanda*. He is the embodiment of love, *ras* and joy. His body is not material; therefore, it is eternal. His body is made up of bliss.

"His body and soul are non-different." – (Kurma Purân)

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[1] According to Indian tradition, he was the son of sage Devarât and was the pupil of sage Vaishampâyan. Once, Vaishampâyan got angry with Yâgnavalkya as the latter displayed too much sense of pride in being abler than other students. The angry teacher asked his pupil Yâgnavalkya to give back all the knowledge of Yajurved he taught him. As per the demands of his Guru, Yâgnavalkya vomited all the knowledge that he acquired from his teacher in form of eaten food. Other disciples of Vaishampâyan took the form of partridge birds and consumed the vomited stuff because it was knowledge and they were very eager to receive the same. The Sanskrit name for partridge is "Tittiri". As the Tittiri (partridge) birds ate this Veda, it is thenceforth called the Taittiriya Yajurved. It is also known as Krishna Yajurved or Black-Yajurved on account of it being a vomited substance. It is also called Taittiriya Samhitâ. Then Yâgnavalkya determined not to have any human guru thereafter. Thus he began to propitiate the Sun God, Surya. Yâgnavalkya worshipped and extolled the Sun, the master of the Vedas, for the purpose of acquiring the fresh Vedic portions not known to his preceptor, Vaishampâyan. The Sun God, pleased with Yâgnavalkya's penance, assumed the form of a horse and graced the sage with such fresh portions of the Yajurveda as were not known to any other. This portion of the Yajurved goes by the name of Shukla Yajurved or White-Yajurved on account of it being revealed by Sun.

"*Sri Bhagavân* has many forms and all the forms are eternal and changeless. These forms do not have a beginning or an end. They are not material, but transcendental." – (Varâha Purân)

"All the forms of Sri *Bhagavân* are true, conscious, infinite and made of blissful *ras.* Even the sages who are extremely pure-hearted and are learned in the *Vedânta* cannot realize Their glory." – (S.B.10.13.54)

This is why the *gyânis* consider His body as an illusion.

Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has told Sârvabhouma Bhattâchârya –

ishwarer sri bigraha sach-chidanandâkâr,
se bigrohe koho sattva guner bikâr.
sri bigroho je nâ mane sei to pâshandi,
adrishya asprishya hoy se jom-dandi.

Meaning – "The Su*preme* Being's form is *sachchidânanda*. How can you say it is made of *sattva-gun*? Who does not accept that Sri *Bhagavân's* form is eternal and blissful is verily an atheist."

Sri *Bhagavân's* form is *sachchidânanda*; this is why it is simultaneously omnipresent and place-bound. Sri *Bhagavân's* power is inconceivable; therefore He is capable of such contradictions. Just because He is in the form of a Deity, it does not mean that He is only there and nowhere else. Sri *Bhagavân* is almighty, hence He is present everywhere, in everything eternally. A material object can be present in a certain place at one time, however this is not the case with Sri *Bhagavân*. He is beyond the rules of the material world. Sri *Bhagavân* is beyond time, beyond the rules of action and reaction, beyond material attributes. His Deity is non-different from Himself. His Deity is without a beginning and end. It was so in the distant past; it is so today and will remain like this in the everlasting future.

Sri *Bhagavân's* body is not made up of the Five Elements

Sri *Bhagavân's* body is not made up of the Five Elements (earth, water, fire, air and space). These comprise only material objects.

"Who considers Sri *Bhagavân's* body to comprise of the Five Elements is banned from performing all auspicious activities mentioned in the Shrutis and the Smritis."

In fact, Sri *Bhagavân's* birth and activities are divine, they are untouched by the illusory energy (= they are not an illusion; they are real) and they are loving expressions of His divine *leelâ-shakti*. The divine abode is an inexhaustible source of *leelâ-ras*. Innumerable forms of that One Su*preme* Being sport therein. From there He takes mercy on the living beings and descends in the material earth. Here He expresses various sweet divine pastimes and again draws these *leelâs* within Himself. This is the mystery of Sri *Bhagavân's* appearance and disappearance.

"Who knows this secret of my divine birth and activities (pastimes) in truth and principle are freed from the bonds of birth and *karma*; they become free of illusion and attain Sri *Bhagavân*." – (B.G.4.9)

Sripâd Râmânujâchârya has explained this verse as follows –
"The Blessed Lord is saying – 'A devotee may have inauspicious qualities that stop him from approaching my lotus feet; however if he knows the truth and principle behind my divine birth and activities, then that knowledge destroys countless inauspicious qualities and the devotee surrenders unto me in this very life, endears himself to me and attains me'"

Sri *Bhagavân* has three *shaktis*

"Whoever knows Sri Krishna's *swarup* and His three *shaktis,* has no doubt about Him." – (C.C.)
We have already mentioned that *Bhagavân* is an absolute and almighty *Tattva.* Now we are analyzing His strength. We can understand Him better if we know His potency.

Sri *Bhagavân* has three principal *shaktis.*

"These three *shaktis* are as follows –

1. ***Chit-shakti*** – We also call it '*swarup-shakti'*. It is '*antarangâ'* or internal. It has infinite opulence and the divine realms such as the countless Vaikunthas are made of this *shakti.*
2. ***Mâyâ-shakti*** – It is the '*bahirangâ*' or external *shakti.* The material world comprising of innumerable universes is made up of this *shakti.*
3. ***Jiv-shakti*** – It is also called '*tatasthâ-shakti'*. It is present in all the living beings.

These three *shaktis* further consist of infinite *shaktis."*- (C.C.)

Chit-shakti

(Internal potency)

Shwetâshwatar Upanishad is saying – "We hear about the *shakti* of the Divine Being"

This *shakti* is nothing but the '*chit-shakti'* or the *'Antarangâ shakti'*. This *shakti* is the closest to Sri *Bhagavân*. This is why we call it 'internal'. It is self-manifesting and is the opposite of non-conscious. Hence, it is 'consciousness' or '*chit-shakti'* ('*chit'* means conscious). It is present in the Su*preme* Being's *swarup*. Therefore, we also call it *'swarup-shakti'*. It is greater than the other two *shaktis* in nature and glory. Therefore, it is '*Parâ-shakti'* or 'su*preme shakti*'. Thus, it has the following names –

- *Antarangâ-shakti*
- *Chit-shakti*
- *Swarup-shakti*
- *Parâ-shakti*

"Sri Krishna is *sat-chit-ânanda*. His *chit-shakti* assumes three forms -

1. *Sandhini* – When the *swarup-shakti* manifests the property *'sat'* (eternally existent), we call it *'sandhini'*. Although Sri *Bhagavân* is *'sat'* personified, He exists and makes others existent using the *sandhini-shakti*.
2. *Samvit* – When the *swarup-shakti* conveys knowledge or consciousness, it is expressing itself as *'samvit'*. Sri *Bhagavân* is the embodiment of knowledge. Yet He uses the *samvit-shakti* to know Himself and make others know about Him.
3. *Hlâdini* –

"When the *swarup-shakti* expresses bliss, we call it *'hlâdini'*." - (C.C.)

Sri *Bhagavân* is Bliss, yet He relishes joy using *Hlâdini-shakti* and makes others relish too.

We cannot separate Sri *Bhagavân's sat*, *chit* and *ânanda*. Similarly *sandhini, samvit* and *hlâdini* too are intermingled with each other.

We have stated that *chit-shakti* is self-manifested. When the sun rises, it shows itself and illuminates other substances as well. Similarly, *chit-shakti* manifests itself as well as other objects. It is a conglomeration of *sandhini*, *samvit* and *hlâdini.* ***Chit-shakti* has a property called *'vishuddha-satva'*** (= especially pure goodness). Sri *Bhagavân* uses this property while appearing. All three – *hlâdini, sandhini* and *samvit* – are present together in *vishuddha-satva*. However sometimes they manifest themselves in equal amounts and sometimes in different proportions. '*Vishuddha-satva'* gains special names depending on howmuch *hlâdini, samvit* and *sandhini* is expressed in it. Some of them are as follows –

- ***Âdhâr-shakti*** – When *sandhini-shakti* expresses itself to a large degree, then '*vishuddha-satva'* is called '*âdhâr-shakti'*. Sri *Bhagavân* manifests His abode using this power.

"When *sandhini-shakti* is dominant we call it as '*shuddha-satva'* (not to be confused with *vishuddha-satva*). Sri *Bhagavân's* power rests on this. His parents, abode, home, bed etc are made up of *shuddha-satva*." – (C.C.)

- ***Âtma-vidyâ*** – When *samvit-shakti* makes up the major portion of *vishuddha-satva*, we call it '*âtma-vidyâ*.' It has two forms – (a) knowledge (b) dispenser of knowledge.
  It gives knowledge to the worshiper.

"The function of *samvit* is to give knowledge about Sri Krishna's divinity and all sorts of spiritual awareness." – (C.C.)

- ***Guhya-vidyâ*** – When *hlâdini* is dominant in *vishuddha-satva,* it is called '*guhya-vidya'* (secret knowledge). It has two forms – (a) devotion (b) harbinger of devotion.
  It gives loving devotion or '*prem-bhakti'* to a devotee.

"When we condense *hlâdini* we get '*prem'.* It is made up of blissful and conscious (or divine) *ras".* – (C.C.)

- ***Murti*** – When *sandhini, samvit* and *hlâdini* manifest in equal amounts in *vishuddha-satva* we call it as '*murti'*. Sri *Bhagavân's* Holy Form manifests due to this *shakti.*

Mâyâ-shakti

(External potency)

Sri *Bhagavân* has described His external *Mâyâ-shakti* to Brahmâji with His own Holy lips –
"I am the only object worth accomplishing. When one cannot understand this and realizes something else, it is '*mâyâ*'. *Mâyâ* cannot exist on its own - just like a reflection or darkness."
- (S.B.2.9.3)

Mâyâ's first characteristic is - when we do not realize Sri *Bhagavân,* we appreciate *mâyâ.* We do not turn towards Him and in stead consider *mâyâ* true. So let us understand that those who have not realized Sri *Bhagavân,* or have turned away from Him are the ones who consider their body and everything related to the body as real. They do not comprehend that these substances are all *mâyâ*. It naturally follows that if we realize Sri *Bhagavân, mâyâ* will not have any effect on us. We will know that *mâyâ's* activities are temporary and material pleasure will never tempt us.

Sri *Bhagavân* has stated another characteristic of *mâyâ* – "It cannot exist on its own". This means that *mâyâ* cannot exist without Sri *Bhagavân*. It is true that when we do not experience Sri *Bhagavân*, we fall into the clutches of *mâyâ*. However, it is also true that Sri *Bhagavân* is the source of *mâyâ.* Power (*Shakti*) has to come from a powerful person (*Shaktimân*). There cannot be any power other than Sri *Bhagavân* (since He is almighty). So this means that *mâyâ* also comes from Him. Nevertheless, we should also know that *mâyâ* is His external potency and does not exist within Him. It is a power working in the material world (outside the divine empire).

Sri *Bhagavân* has explained *mâyâ* further with two examples – "Just like (a) reflection and (b) darkness". We can see the reflection of the sun in a water body. The sun's reflection is very far from the sun and it is in the world. Similarly, *mâyâ* occurs outside the divine realm. Sri *Bhagavân's* internal potency works in His transcendental world while *mâyâ* manifests itself in the material world.

We may ask – "Power exists within the powerful person. When *Mâyâ* is present so far from the Su*preme* Being then how can you call it His *Shakti*?" The answer is – A powerful person is the **source** of power. It cannot survive without him. We cannot see the sun's reflection in the absence of the sun. Therefore, although *Mâyâ* exists far from the Su*preme* Being, He is its source."

Another point - "Mâyâ is like darkness". If we stare long enough at the sun's reflection, its glare blinds us and we begin to see darkness. This darkness is present in our eyes and not in the sun. However, we experience the darkness because of the sun. Likewise, although the Su*preme* Being is the source of *Mâyâ* it exists outside Him. Sri Jiva Goswâmipâd says, "External *Mâyâ* is of two types – (a) *Jiva-mâyâ* (b) *Guna-mâyâ*.

(a) ***Jiva-mâyâ*** – When we stare at the sun's reflection in a water body, its glare blinds us. Similarly, the *Mâyâ* that covers our intelligence is called '*Jiva-mâyâ'*. It has two functions –

- To cover – *Mâyâ* covers our intelligence and does not allow us to know our *swarup*. It prevents us from learning that we are originally transcendental beings.

- To distract – *Mâyâ* distracts us from the lotus feet of Sri *Bhagavân* and instead throws our mind into non-conscious matter. It makes us feel that we are this body and makes our mind wander in the alleys of sense gratification.

(b) ***Guna-mâyâ*** - As we continue to look intently at the reflection of the sun, the darkness assumes many shapes. Similarly, *mâyâ* presents three *gunas* – *satvah*, *rajah, tamah* - in various shapes to us.

"The material world is not a source at all. Nature is without any consciousness. Sri Krishna takes mercy and implants His *shakti* in it. When a piece of iron encounters fire, the fire transmits its quality to the iron (that is the iron becomes red hot like the fire). Similarly due to His *shakti,* Nature assumes some attributes or *gunas."* – (C.C.)

Tatasthâ Jiva-shakti

(The *shakti* inside living beings)

The shâstras prove that the living being is essentially Sri *Bhagavân's Shakti*. Sri Vishnu Purân says –
"We call Vishnu-*shakti* or *Swarup-shakti* as divine power. There is another *shakti* called *Jiva-shakti*. There is a third power that results in ignorance (external *Mâyâ-shakti*)."

We also find in Sri Gitâ –

Sri Krishna told Arjun – "O mighty-armed hero, I have an excellent power called *Jiva-shakti* which is different from *Mâyâ-shakti*. This excellent power is holding the world."

"The living entity is *shakti* (Power) while Sri Krishna is the *Shaktimân* (powerful person). The scriptures such as Sri Gitâ and Vishnu Purân prove this." – (C.C.)

This *Jiva-shakti* belongs neither to *Swarup-shakti* nor to *Mâyâ-shakti*. We call it '*tatasthâ'* – something that lies midway between the two. Sri *Bhagavân* is almighty and conscious Being while the *Jiva-shakti* is atom-like in comparison. Shrutis mention that – the *Jiva* is as small as the ten thousandth part of the tip of a hair. There are countless *jivas*. We can classify them into two groups –

(a) ***Nitya-mukta*** (eternally free) – A class of living beings are turned towards Sri *Bhagavân* and have divine knowledge since time infinite. They are '*Nitya-mukta'*.

(b) ***Nitya-baddha*** (eternally bound) – This group has forgotten Sri *Bhagavân* since eternity and is turned away from Him. – (Paramâtma-Sandarbha)

Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has told in Sanâtan-shikshâ –

"*Jivas* are of two types – (a) eternally free and (b) eternally bound to the material world. Those who are eternally free turn toward Sri Krishna's feet forever. They are His associates and enjoy the pleasure of serving Him. The eternally bound are the ones who have turned away from Him since infinity. They suffer hellish pains in the material world." – (C.C.)

Sri *Bhagavân* is the only One worth worshiping

Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has told in Sanâtan-shikshâ –

"Jiva forgot that he is the eternal servant of Sri Krishna. Due to this crime, *Mâyâ* tied a noose round his neck. When he learns this and serves Sri Gurudev and Sri Krishna, he becomes free from *Mâyâ's* clutches and attains Sri Krishna's feet." – (C.C.)

Since eternity, we have turned away from Sri *Bhagavân*. Therefore, our heart is always unclean. This is the reason that in spite of being a part of That *sat-chit-ânanda* (which means, originally the *jiva* is blissful), the living entity is in *mâyâ's* grip and is suffering in various species perpetually. If *Jiva* wants to break free from *Mâyâ's* bondage and enjoy permanent bliss, he has no option but to worship the lotus feet of Sri *Bhagavân.* The Lord has said with His Holy lips –

"O Arjun, my *Mâyâ* bewitches all living beings. It comprises of the three *gunas* - *sattva, raja*, *tama.* It is verily insurmountable. The tiny *jiva* can never fight with *Mâyâ-shakti* and defeat it. Only those who surrender unto me can cross the ocean-like *mâyâ.*" – (B.G.7.14)

"Sri Krishna is like the brilliant sun, while *Mâyâ* is darkness. When Sri Krishna is present, *Mâyâ* cannot exist." – (C.C.)

When the *jiva*, who is Sri Krishna's eternal servant, wishes to go beyond the dark ocean-like *Mâyâ* and gain the joyous loving service of Sri *Bhagavân*, he certainly has to accept the path of God-worship. This is why Sri Krishna has told Arjun –

"O Bhârat, you surrender completely unto the Su*preme* Being. Then by His mercy, you will gain su*preme* peace and attain His eternal abode." – (B.G.18.62)

In Srimad-Bhagavad-Gitâ, after describing desire-free *karma*, the path of knowledge and yog-practices, the Lord has said –

"O Arjun, I am repeating the deepest secret, hear my su*preme* words. You are extremely dear to me – therefore I am telling you. Surrender your heart to me, become my devotee, worship me and bow before me. You are my very dear one – I pledge that if you follow my command you shall certainly get me. Forsake all *dharma* and take my shelter alone. I will free you from all sins – do not grieve." – (B.G.18.64-66)

"Earlier He (Sri Krishna) advised the principles of the Vedas, *karma,* yog and *gyân.* Ultimately, He gave a strong commandment. If the devotee has faith in this commandment, he forsakes all activities and worships Sri Krishna." - (C.C.)

Sri *Bhagavân* instructed Arjun on many subjects and eventually revealed the most confidential message hidden in the heart of all shâstras – to worship Sri *Bhagavân* and take shelter of His lotus feet. He has stated this very clearly. Life is short. We would like to perform various *dharmas,* clean up our heart and gain the highest goal. However, by then our life is finished. There is neither any time nor the opportunity to reach the goal. As a result, compassionate Sri *Bhagavân* is telling Arjun to forsake all other *dharmas* and directly surrender unto Him. He is instructing Arjun about *bhajan*. Sri *Bhagavân* loves those who seek His protection. He has vowed to burn all our sins that become obstacles in the path of *bhakti*. Our hearts are stained with material attachment and envy that we have collected since infinity. We can never clean

up our heart on our own. So, if we are intelligent, we shall surely take Sri *Bhagavân's* shelter with singular devotion and make ourselves blessed. We have to sacrifice our ego completely and depend on His Holy feet. Then we will gain the serene touch of His mercy. We shall rest in su*preme* peace and sanctify ourselves. Those of us who wish to soothe the scorching heat of the three fold miseries and float in the river of love should surrender at His Holy feet with body, mind and soul and take to the path of divine *bhajan*. Then, after this karmic body ends, we shall become divine associates and absorb in His service. We will relish Sri *Bhagavân's* sweet transcendental beauty, excellences and pastimes forever and they will appear new each time. No scripture or saint disagrees with this. Sri *Bhagavân* has told Sri Uddhav –

"O Uddhav, I have prescribed duties in the Vedas and have stated that it is good to follow these rules and it is wrong not to obey them. However, in spite of knowing this, if someone considers the Vedic rules to be a disturbance in his path of meditation (upon me), he has firmly decided that he will accomplish the highest goal solely on the strength of my Bhakti, and he has forsaken all dharmas to practice Bhajan, he is a topmost saint." – (S.B.11.11.32)

Sripâd Shukamuni has stated in the beginning of Srimad-Bhâgavatam -

"tasmâd bhârata sarvâtmâ bhagavânishwaro harih,
shravyah kirtitavyashcha smartavyashchechchhatâbhayam."

"O Parikshit *Mahâ*râj, whoever wishes to get rid of fear ought to hear, glorify and reminisce only about Sri Hari, Who is 'sarvâtmâ' (present in everybody's heart) and is the Su*preme* Controller." – (S.B.2.1.5)

Sridhar Swâmipâd has explained this verse as follows – "Sripâd Shukamuni explained that Sri *Bhagavân* is the only Person worthy of worshiping. To indicate this he has used four names –

- *'Sarvâtmâ'* (present in everybody's heart) –>He is dear to all.
- *'Bhagavân'* -> this word stands for beauty.
- *Ishwar* –>it is necessary to worship Him.
- Hari ->He steals material bondage.

Why does Shukadev Goswâmi use the name 'sarvâtmâ'?

The Vedas, whom we consider as our Mother, too tells us that –

"The su*preme* Being Who dwells in our heart is dearer to us than even our children, wealth and everything else." – (Brihad-Âranyak Upanishad.1.4.8.).

"We like the objects not because they are those objects, but because they contain the Su*preme* One in them." – (Brihad-Âranyak Upanishad)

The Su*preme* Being's consciousness reflects in material objects and makes them worthy of love. He is the Soul of the soul. This is why our soul is dear to us. *Paramâtmâ* is worthy of selfless love. This Great Soul is amalgamated with everything in the universe – whether it has a soul or not and is making it lovable. Water naturally proceeds towards the sea. Similarly, the love of every living being flows towards Sri *Bhagavân*. The scriptures say "*priya eva varaniya bhavati*" (what you love appears great). Since we naturally love Sri *Bhagavân*, we find Him great and so it is easy to worship Him.

The question may arise – we see that only the love of staunch devotees flow towards Sri *Bhagavân*. Then how can we say that everybody's love is directed to Him? The reply is that, although water naturally flows towards the sea, we do not find all water bodies heading for the same. Only the rivers flow into the sea. If water logs in some hole or ditch, it stops flowing. Gradually, it becomes filthy, rots and worms wriggle in it. We cannot use this water for drinking or bathing. However, it does not mean that this water has lost its property or qualification to move towards the sea. Now if there is torrential rain, and the rainwater enters the ditch, the water rises up. The worms are destroyed. The water becomes pure, enters a

stream and into Ganga. It mixes with the water of Ganga and gushes towards the sea, unobstructed. In the same manner, the living being, who has turned away from Sri Krishna - his love is confined to small holes (material objects of sense gratification). Therefore, it has become selfish and filthy. Thousands of worms (material desires) are wriggling in it. The natural function of love, that is, to serve Sri *Bhagavân*, is lost (just like the ditch-water that loses its potability). Even then, it retains its characteristic to rush towards Sri *Bhagavân*. If he hears abundant nectarine Harikathâ in the association of pure devotees (this is like the torrential rain), then the sweet talk along with *kripâ* of the pure devotees enter his heart through his ears. His love forsakes materialism, selfishness and becomes pure. It rushes towards Sri *Bhagavân.* Gradually it mixes with the Ganga-like *bhakti* and flows uninterruptedly towards Him. Sripâd Shukamuni has indicated this process by using the name '*sarvâtmâ*'.

What does *'Bhagavân'* indicate?

Also, He is '*Bhagavân*', which indicates that He is immeasurably beautiful and sweet. Tell me, who does not worship beauty? We like to see beautiful things, our ears crave for sweet music, we like to taste beautiful delicious food with the tongue, our nose seeks beautiful fragrance and our skin desires the touch of beautiful soft and luxurious objects. We think of beautiful things and love beauty. The fact that all our senses tend to worship beauty indicates that in reality they would like to adore That '*satyam shivam sundaram'* – immensely beautiful and immeasurably sweet Sri *Bhagavân*. We shall never be satisfied with the material world since it is non-conscious and even happiness here ultimately results in pain. By the grace of pure devotees, when we gain the knowledge of Sri *Bhagavân's* divine beauty and *ras*, our senses absorb in Him forever. Then we loathe worldly beauty and enjoyments. Sripâd Shukamuni has used the word '*Bhagavân*' because He is the only Person worthy of our adoration.

Why does Shukadev Goswâmi use the name *'Ishwar'*?

The name *'Ishwar'* tells us that it is necessary for all humankind to worship Him. This is because, by worshiping Him, we do well for ourselves – in fact, extremely well.

"Those of us who feel, "I am this body and everything related to this body belongs to me" are always anxious. We constantly worry about losing our possessions. However, if we worship *Achyuta* (the One Who is steadfast) we lose our fear and gain nectarine divine *prem* – thus we are blessed."
– (S.B.11.2.30)

On the other hand –
"Who do not worship God, are evil, lowest amongst humankind, *Mâyâ* shrouds their intellect and they are *âsuric.*"- (B.G.7.15)

"The Su*preme* Controller throws such lowly people in violent species such as tigers and snakes repeatedly." – (B.G.16.19)

This means that it is absolutely necessary for everyone to worship God.

What does 'Hari' mean?

Shukadev Goswâmi has called Sri *Bhagavân* as 'Hari'. Hari means 'One Who steals. No one is capable of stealing material bondage other than Sri Hari. He no only steals material bondage, but also steals our heart with *prem.* Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has told with His Holy Lips –

"'Hari' has many meanings, of which two are most important – "One Who steals all inauspiciousness' and 'One Who steals our heart with *prem*." – (C.C.)

What is the main reason for our material bondage? Our sinful tendencies. These are the 'inauspicious qualities'. Sri Hari steals these qualities. Now, we know that people steal only costly items when they want something, yet do not get it. If Sri Hari asks us to give Him our unfavorable qualities, we will certainly give Him, what is the need for Him to steal? But then, we consider all our evil aspects to be good! Therefore, we do not want to give them up! It

becomes necessary for Sri Hari to steal them secretly. When our heart becomes empty of all material desires, He fills it nicely with His *prem*. He steals our heart with His beauty and sweetness. This is why Sri Hari alone is worthy of our adoration.

In another verse, Sripâd Shukamuni has explained very nicely that we should worship only Sri Bhagavân -

"Our topmost duty is to worship Sri *Bhagavân*, because He is always present within everyone. He is our soul and hence dearest to us. He is the eternal Truth. He is indestructible and full of adorable qualities. Worshiping Him is a joyous activity. If we worship Him firmly then our ignorance easily disappears." – (S.B.2.2.6)

Shridhar Swâmipâd has explained this verse as follows –

"We must worship only Sri *Bhagavân*. Sripâd Shukamuni has stated some extraordinary facts to prove this point.

1. Sri *Bhagavân* is always present in every living element, hence, to worship Him we never have to search elsewhere. He knows what is going on in our mind. Therefore, even if we do not use external objects to worship Him and simply make offerings in meditation, He accepts them and is pleased. He is well aware of our infinite past, present and future – so even if we perform *bhajan* after hundreds and thousands of lifetimes, He starts giving us His *kripâ* that will pave our path for *bhajan*. If we take one step towards Him, He takes a thousand steps to come near us. Who else, other than Sri Hari is so compassionate?

2. Sri *Bhagavân* is the Su*preme* Soul. Therefore, He is our dearest One. We feel naturally happy to serve whom we love. Hence, everyone finds pleasure in serving Sri Hari.

3. Sri *Bhagavân* is Truth personified. He is not false and temporary like the body and things related o the body. He is the treasure of our soul. He is not perishable like worldly *dharmas* and *karmas.* Even if we perform little *bhajan* we will surely progress on the path of devotion. We may face repeated obstacles on the path of *bhakti* due to inauspicious qualities resulting out of bad association. In spite of this, as soon as our major unworthy aspects disappear, we are certain to gain this priceless *bhajan* - if not in this life, then in some other life.

4. Sri *Bhagavân* loves His devotees. He is very much compassionate. He has countless more adorable qualities. If we serve Him even a little bit, He considers it great. Even though we may offer Him just a palmful of water and one *Tulsi* leaf, He gives Himself to His devotee.

The plus point is that Sri Hari's *bhajan* is not difficult at all. In fact worshiping Him is highly pleasurable. Sri *Bhagavân* is Bliss. His Name, excellences and *leelâs* all express bliss. Therefore, when we relish that joy in hearing and glorifying Him, our *bhajan* becomes natural and most blissful. When the sun rises, darkness flees. In the same manner, when we perform *bhajan* that is easy as well as pleasurable, our ignorance perishes (this is the side effect of *bhajan*). The main effect is – we get Sri *Bhagavân's darshan* very soon and get His actual *sevâ*. Then we become fortunate forever and ever.
Here we should also know that the Vedas are self-manifested. They are transcendental. They have revealed the identity of Sri *Bhagavân* to humanity. We should be grateful to them, for otherwise, we would have never learnt about the Su*preme* Being Who is eternal, infinite, super natural and inconceivable. The Vedas have declared divine forms such as Sri Krishna, Sri Gourânga, Sri Râm, and Sri Nrisimha etc. as worshiped Deities. If we wish our welfare, we must worship Them. Nowadays it is a fashion to raise some magicians and successful yogis to the altar and worship them as God. We find this trait (of converting man into God) especially amongst the Bengalis. In Bengal, there is an epidemic of incarnations – so much, so that gullible simpletons are worshiping these cheats to fulfill cheap desires such as money and

position. This is why we say – devotees, beware! We are not short of God that we have to search for some new god and worship him. In this special Kaliyug, Sri Gourânga *Mahâ*prabhu, the hidden incarnation, has appeared and has preached the most confidential path of Sri Krishna-worship. He has revealed how to adore Sri Krishna, Whom all the Vedas, and above all Srimad-Bhâgavatam, the essence of the Vedas prove as the *Swayam Bhagavân*. Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has blest us with this information. We are ever grateful to Him for teaching us how to worship Sri Sri Râdhârâni - Who is Sri Krishna's root potency, and *Swayam Bhagavân* Vrajendra-nandan - Who is sweetness personified. We shall learn about Them more in the following chapters – Scientific study of Sri Krishna and Sri Râdhâ.

Sri Krishna-Tattva-Vigyaan

(A Scientific Study of Sri Krishna)

Sri Krishna is the sole Objective of the Vedic scriptures

Sri Gitâ is the essence of all the Upanishads and Sri Krishna Himself had told Arjun his dearmost friend, su*preme* devotee and cousin brother–

"*vedaishcha sarvairahameva vedyo vedântakrid veda-videva châham"*.G.15.15)

Meaning – "O Arjun, only I am to be known by the Vedas, I am the compiler of Vedânta and the knower of Vedas."

Sri Krishna is the ultimate aim of Bhagavad-Gita

Therefore, while summing up the Gitâ, Sri Krishna told Arjun to transcend all other endeavors such as karma, gyân, yog etc. Rather than following these paths, the Lord has proclaimed that we should directly serve His lotus feet lovingly. He has declared this practice to be the topmost and the most confidential. His su*preme* words are as follows –

sarva-guhyatamam bhuyah shrinu me paramam vachah,
ishto'si me dridhamiti tato vakshyâmi te hitam.

- (B.G.18.64)

Meaning – "O Arjun, I have already imparted to you the confidential, more confidential and the most confidential knowledge. However, these are not my topmost instructions. Now I shall divulge the su*preme*most secret and it is also my topmost instruction. Do hear attentively. You are very dear to me, so I shall tell you what is best for you."

Thus Sri Krishna drew Arjun's attention towards the topmost form of worship and said –

"*manmanâ bhava mad-bhakto madyâji mân namaskuru,*
mâmevaishyasi satyan te pratijâne priyo'si me.
sarva-dharmân parityajya mâmekam sharanam Braja,
ahan twâm sarvapâpebhyo mokshayishyâmi mâ shucha."

- (B.G.18.65-66)

Meaning – "O Arjun, surrender your mind to me (always think about me), be my devotee (always hear and glorify me), worship me and bow only to me; then you will achieve me – I am telling you the truth. Forsake all dharmas and surrender unto me – I shall liberate you from all sins, therefore do not grieve."

Sri Krishna's ultimate message in Bhagavad-Gitâ is to transgress all religious practices and serve His lotus feet. In this manner, through Arjun He is teaching entire humanity that He alone is the Objective of all Vedic scriptures.

Sri Krishna is the sole Objective of Srimad-Bhâgavatam

Like Bhagavad-Gitâ, Srimad Bhâgavatam too has Sri Krishna as His sole aim. The blessed Bhâgavatam has appeared simply to drench humanity in the pleasurable *ras* of Sri Krishna's divine pastimes. Although Srimad-Bhâgavatam describes ten subjects such as creation, dissolution etc., His real intention is to reveal Sri Krishna Who is the source of everything.

"*dashamasya vishuddhyarthan navâvâm-iha lakshanam"*

Meaning – "Srimad-Bhâgavatam describes the nine subjects such as creation only to impart the especially pure knowledge about Sri Krishna Who is the tenth subject."

"I pay obeisance to Sri Krishna, Who is the tenth subject of Srimad-Bhâgavatam, Who protects those who seek His shelter, Who is the root source of everyone and all the worlds, and Who is the Objective of the tenth *skandha*[1] of Srimad-Bhâgavatam."

– (*Bhâv*ârtha-dipikâ purport of S.B.10.1.1)

From the above statement, we can easily understand that Sri Krishna is the su*preme* source of even Srimad-Bhâgavatam. In the beginning of Srimad-Bhâgavatam itself, the sages led by Sri Shounak expressed the desire to hear Sri Krishna-Kathâ from Suta Muni. It is a point to be noted, for this is what triggered off Srimad-Bhâgavatam in the first place.

"Dear Suta, may you be blessed. You know why *Bhagavân* Sri Krishna, the Lord of the Yadus, appeared as the son of Sri Vâsudev and Devaki. We are desirous of hearing Sri Krishna-Kathâ, therefore please talk constantly about Sri Krishna to us. After all, Lord Krishna appeared for the welfare and prosperity of the entire universe." – (S.B.2.1.12-13)

Sri Suta Muni started with Srimad-Bhâgavatam just to answer this question; hence, we cannot have any doubt that Sri Krishna is Srimad-Bhâgavatam's sole Objective.

The second point is that Sri Suta Muni has also declared **Srimad-Bhâgavatam as Sri Krishna's representative** in the beginning of his narration –

"When *Bhagavân* Sri Krishna left for His abode along with auspicious qualities such as *dharma,* knowledge and renunciation, He gifted the unfortunate person of Kaliyug with this jewel-like scripture that is resplendent like the sun – Srimad-Bhâgavatam - who is His representative."

How can we ever imagine that Srimad-Bhâgavatam (Sri Krishna's spokesperson) to proclaim anyone other than He as the sole Object? Moreover, Garud Purân has asserted that Srimad-Bhâgavatam is '*sâkshâ-bhagavadotih*' – manifested from Sri Krishna Himself. Swayam *Bhagavân* Sri Krishna can never establish anyone other than Himself. Gopâl-Tâpani Shruti very clearly mentions that Sri Krishna has revealed Srimad-Bhâgavatam –

"I pay obeisance to That Sri Krishna Who imparted the science of self-realization to Brahmâ in the beginning of Creation."

Thus Srimad-Bhâgavatam is the teaching that Sri Krishna imparted to Brahma and through him to Nârad, Vyâs and ultimately to all of us. Hence, Srimad-Bhâgavatam's aim is to glorify Sri Krishna.

Truth is another name of Sri Krishna

Some of us think that the introduction and conclusion of Srimad-Bhâgavatam contains the verse "*satyam param dhimahi*" – I meditate on the Truth – this indicates that Srimad-Bhâgavatam does not advocate any particular divine form, but just the "Truth". We beg to reply, "Truth simply happens to be Sri Krishna's name."

We find in *Mahâ*bhârat –

"Bhishmadev said – Sri Krishna resides in Truth and Truth resides in Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna is truer than the su*preme* truth; therefore Truth is one of His names."

During Sri Krishna's appearance, the devatâs such as Lord Brahmâ glorified Sri Krishna in the womb of Mother Devaki as -

"We surrender unto the lotus feet of Sri Krishna – Who is the decisive truth, is achievable by truth, is the unwavering truth in the past, present and future, the source of the five elements[2],

[1] Since Srimad-Bhâgavatam is called a wish-fulfilling tree, its parts are designated as 'skandhas' or branches
[2] Earth, water, fire, air and space

the Omniscient, and the divine *Tattva,* the True Word, the harbinger of equanimity, and the Truth personified." – (S.B.10.2.26)

Besides this, Sri Krishna has told in very clear terms to his dear devotee Uddhav in Srimad-Bhâgavatam that He is the topmost goal of the Shrutis

"Whom do the Shrutis worship by adopting regulative principles in the *Karma Kânda*? Whom do they propitiate with *Mantra*s in the *devatâ-kânda*? Whom do they analyze in the *gyân-kânda*? On whom do they debate? No one knows the answers to these questions, other than me. In fact, all the Shrutis decide that I am *yagna*, propitiate me with *mantra*s; consider me as the topic of debate, reject the existence of any other Object and ultimately establish me. I am the **Goal of all the Vedas**. The Vedas are under my protection and hence prevent man from succumbing to Mâyâ. They conclude by declaring that **I am the su*preme* goal**."

We can understand from these words of Sri Krishna that all the Vedas worship Him alone. This is why the scriptures such as Gopâl-Tâpani Shruti has flatly stated –

"*krishna eva paro devastam dhyâyet tam raset*"
Meaning – "Sri Krishna alone is the Su*preme* Being; meditate on Him and take *ras* in Him."
"*esha brahmanyo devakiputrah*"
Meaning - "The son of Devaki is the Brahman (Su*preme* Being)."

Sri Krishna is God Himself

Sri Suta Muni has said in Srimad-Bhâgavatam –
'ete châmsha kalâh pumsah krishnastu Bhagavân swayam."

Meaning –"They (whom I mentioned so far) are parts or parts of the parts, but Sri Krishna is Swayam *Bhagavân* (God Himself)." – (S.B.1.3.8)

We owe credit to Srimad-Bhâgavatam for the term 'Swayam *Bhagavân*'. No scripture has used this phrase for any other divine form. Our preceptors tell us, this sentence is Veda-Vyâs's pledge of declaration and he has used it to establish Sri Krishna's su*prem*acy. We find the phrase 'Swayam *Bhagavân*' in the third chapter of the first branch of Srimad-Bhâgavatam. This chapter deals with the incarnations. It is popularly known as '*janma-guhya-adhyây'* (the chapter containing the mystery of creation'. It goes like this –

"*jagrihe pourusham rupam Bhagavân mahadâdibhih,*
Sambhutam shodashakalam-âdou lokasisrikshayâ."

Meaning - "Once again Sri *Bhagavân* wished to create the worlds with the twenty four elements such as *mahat* etc. Therefore, He assumed the divine form of Purush with its sixteen attributes."

This Purush does not have any material quality; it is '*vishuddha-satvam-urjitam*' – especially pure and self-manifested. He is Kâranârnav-shâyi[1] Nârâyan. From Him, Garbhodakashâyi, the second Purush emanates and from Him all other incarnations manifest. Therefore, the preceptors call the second Purush, that is, Garbhodakashâyi Nârâyan as the seed of all incarnations. Who are these incarnations? Suta Muni replied starting with Sanak Rishi, he went on to Varâha, Nârad, Nara-nârâyan, Kapil and finally when he reached the nineteenth and twentieth names, he said –

"Balarâm and Krishna appeared on numbers nineteen and twenty in the Vrishni clan and delivered the earth from sinful elements."
When we read this part, the first thought that strikes us is – "When Suta Muni has included Sri Krishna's name in the list of incarnations, then He must be one of them. This is a valid point since he is discussing incarnations. Therefore since he has taken Sri Krishna's name, we ought to call Him an incarnation." However, this is a big blunder and we shall prove it just now.

[1] The One Who lies in the Kâran ocean.

The preceptors who have explained Srimad-Bhâgavatam say – here although Sri Krishna has appeared in this context (of incarnations) he is not an incarnation of the Purush, rather He is the original Person, God Himself. They prove their statement by quoting the verse *"jagrihe pourusham rupam Bhagavân mahadâdibhih"*. In this verse, Srimad-Bhâgavatam has started talking about '*Bhagavân*' and in the verse *"râma-krishnâ-viti bhuvo-Bhagavânaharadbhayam"* He (Srimad-Bhâgavatam) has concluded with '*Bhagavân*'. In this manner, Srimad-Bhâgavatam has expressed that the Purush has appeared from Sri *Bhagavân* and all the incarnations have manifested from the Purush. Srimad-Bhâgavatam goes on to mention all the incarnations one after another, however, He does not refer any of them as '*Bhagavân*'. He utters '*Bhagavân*' only to refer to Sri Krishna. It is clear that Lord Veda Vyâs is not ready to call any incarnation as the root or actually God. Rather, from the depth of his heart, he wants to proclaim that Sri Krishna is God Himself, all the incarnations have manifested from Purush and Purush has appeared from Sri Krishna.
Vedanta Philosophy uses this method of analysis. If we use this process to investigate into what-is-the-real-intention, then we shall arrive at the conclusion that the One Who had assumed the form of Purush, in the very beginning of creation, and from whom all the incarnations have appeared is none other than Sri Krishna, God Himself.

To wipe away any inkling of doubt, Sri Suta Muni, after calling Sri Krishna as '*Bhagavân*' boldly declares once again – *"ete châmsha kalâh pumsah krishnastu Bhagavân swayam"* – "O Rishis! Previously all the incarnations that I have mentioned – none of them is Purush, some are parts of Purush, while the others are parts of the parts. However, Sri Krishna is God Himself. Sri Krishna is replete with all powers and He is the su*preme Tattva.* He is not an incarnation, but the source of all incarnations, He is not a part but the whole, He is not Purush but Purushottam, and…..He is not *Bhagavân* (God) but Swayam *Bhagavân* (God Himself).

This verse blows the trumpet of Sri Krishna being God Himself. It is the crest-jewel of all the verses in Srimad-Bhâgavatam. Lord Veda-Vyâs has used it as a declaration. Based on this statement the great saints such as **Shridhar Swâmipâd** have accepted Sri Krishna as the su*preme* truth and thus explained Srimad-Bhâgavatam. According to our Goswamis, this statement defines Srimad-Bhâgavatam's original Tattva.

What is a definition?

"aniyame niyamakârini paribhâshâ"

Meaning - "A definition is a set of words that regularizes an irregular description."

A definition occurs only once in a text. It is never repeated. The rest of the text just explains the definition. Similarly, "Krishna is God Himself" appears only once in Srimad-Bhâgavatam. The statement is crystal clear by itself. It towers over the scripture like a sovereign king. It proudly flies like a flag of victory over all other statements. Shridhar Swâmi has explained this verse as follows –

"Sri Krishna is God Himself because all the shaktis are always present in Him."

Srimaj-Jiva Goswâmipâd says, "The words 'Swayam *Bhagavân*' strongly prove that Sri Krishna is the source of all incarnations."

If we want to know about the truth regarding Sri Krishna we have to contemplate very deeply on this verse. Then we will understand why Vyâsdev has instructed us that Sri Krishna alone is God Himself. Why did he say "Sri Krishna alone is God Himself" and not "God Himself is Sri Krishna"? The litterateurs state the rule –

"anuvâdam-anuktaiva na vidheyam-udeerayet"

Meaning - "Do not state the predicate without first stating the subject."

Going by this rule, the literary pandits say that – in the sentence '*krishnastu Bhagavân swayam'*, 'Sri Krishna' is the subject and '*Bhagavân swayam'* (God himself) is the predicate and describes

Him. Had Vyâsdev said "God Himself is Sri Krishna" it would have seemed as if there is someone called 'God Himself' and He appears as Sri Krishna. However, this is not he case. Srila Krishnadâs Kavirâj Goswâmi has explained this matter very sweetly and simply. He has written –

"After Suta Gosâin included Krishnachandra in his list of ordinary incarnations, he got very scared. Therefore, he stated their positions. He said that they were all incarnations – either parts or parts of the parts of Purush. However, Sri Krishna is Swayam *Bhagavân* and the root source of all.

I can hear my opponents passing sarcastic comments – what an explanation! Do you not know that Lord Nârâyan of Paravyom (the divine world) is God Himself? He comes and appears as Krishna. This is what the verse means, what is there to explain?

I tell my opponents – why do you assume wrong things and then argue? You can never prove a hypothesis that contradicts the shâstras. We are never supposed to state the predicate before the subject. We should always state the subject first and then the predicate. 'Predicate' is that part of a sentence what we do not know, while the 'subject' is of what we are already aware. For example – when we say "this Brahmin is very scholarly", 'the brahmin' is the subject and 'is very scholarly' is the predicate. Now everyone knows that he is a brahmin, but that 'he is very scholarly' is the new information. Therefore we mention the word 'brahmin' first and then 'very scholarly'.

Similarly, Suta Gosâin has already mentioned the incarnations. So we know this. But whose incarnations? This is unknown. *'ete'* means 'these' – the incarnations – this is the subject. '*châmsha kalâ pumsah'* (parts or parts of the parts of Purush) is the predicate. In the same way, he has already mentioned Krishna in his list. So we know Him. But we do not know His specialty. Therefore, he states 'Krishna' first – this is the subject, and the predicate '*Bhagavân* Swayam', later.

Suta Gosain's topmost goal is to highlight the fact that Sri Krishna is God Himself. Had He been the part and Nârâyan the whole, then Suta would have reversed the words in his sentence. He would have then said, "Nârâyan is God Himself and That God Himself is (has appeared as) Krishna." You see, the great wise preceptors don't have faults such as *bhram, pramâd, vipra-lipsâ* and *karanâpâtav.* You are drawing all wrong conclusions and when I am pointing them out you are getting angry. The other divine forms get their divinity from Sri Krishna, so we call Him Swayam *Bhagavân*. Period." – (C.C.)

"Sri Krishna alone is the source of everything – He contains all the abodes and all universes repose in Him." – (C.C.)

Not only Srimad-Bhâgavatam, but Sri Brahma-Samhitâ too states that Sri Krishna alone is God Himself and other divine forms are either His portion or parts of the parts. Sri Brahma-Samhitâ begins with -

"ishwarah paramah krishna sachchidânanda vigrahah,
Anâdir-âdi govindah sarva-kârana-kâranam."

Meaning - "Sri Krishna is the Su*preme* controller and His form is eternal, conscious and blissful. He is without a beginning and He is the beginning of everything; Govinda is the cause of all causes."

Afer having established the above fact, Brahma-Samhitâ goes on to state –
"I worship That Primeval Person Sri Govinda, That Su*preme* Being, Who has expressed His Shaktis through forms such as Lord Râm and has manifested various incarnations in this world, and Himself has appeared as Sri Krishna."

In spite of all these good logic, some object saying that although "*krishnastu Bhagavân swayam"* does indicate that Sri Krishna is God Himself, this is not Srimad-Bhâgavatam's intention. Had this been so, His name would not have been enlisted as an incarnation. After all, Srimad-Bhâgavatam has put Him in line with all other incarnations such as Râmchandra. Moreover, why should

Swayam *Bhagavân* descend on earth? His incarnations are enough to put down the evil and protect the good. Why should Swayam *Bhagavân* leave His blissful transcendental abode and come to this material world? Hence, the word '*krishne'* in the verse '*krishnastu Bhagavân swayam'* means Lord Nârâyan and not Sri Krishna, the Son of Vasudev. They say that many times the word 'Krishna' in Srimad-Bhâgavatam refers to Nârâyan. Therefore Sriman-Nârâyan, the master of the divine world is God Himself, He appeared as Kâranârnav-shâyi Purush in the beginning of creation and all other incarnations have appeared from Purush. Valid point.

Srimaj-Jiva Goswami has crushed all these arguments of the opposition by using the analytical method of Mimânsâ[1] darshan and has firmly established Sri Krishna as Swayam *Bhagavân*. He has written –

"Just because Sri Krishna is enlisted with incarnations we should not doubt that He is God Himself. Mimânsâ Shastra has one formula –

Pourvaparye purva-dourbalyam prakritivat

Meaning – Sometimes, if there is a contradiction between previous and later statements in the scriptures, the later statements are stronger and will express the true meaning of the previous statements.

Nyây Shâstra (logic) also states-

purvâparayor-madhye para-vidhi balavân

Meaning - The later instruction is stronger than the previous one."

There is another example to elucidate this point. It is very interesting. Agnishtom yagnya has a rule – At the end of the fire sacrifice, the priest chanting *mantra*s from Rig Ved (he starts the fire) and the priest who utters *mantra*s from Sâm Ved (he concludes the sacrifice) holds the ends of each other's dhotis and circumambulate the pyre. While doing so, by chance, if the beginner-priest is separated from the concluding-priest, then as repentance you have to perform the sacrifice again without paying any fee. However, if the cloth slips from the concluder's hand, then you have to pay the entire fee and perform the sacrifice all over again. Now what happens if both of them let go of the cloth simultaneously before they complete the parikramâ? You surely cannot pay and not pay the fees! Well, Maharshi Jaimini[2] says, the latter rule will hold true since it is stronger than the previous rule. This means, that you have to pay the entire fee and repeat the fire-sacrifice. Following in the same footsteps, we too assert that although Suta Muni has listed Sri Krishna as an incarnation earlier, and declared as Swayam *Bhagavân* later, the declaration is stronger. Undoubtedly.
If anyone is still reluctant to believe this, Srimaj-Jiva Goswâmi has mentioned another formula from the Mimânsâ Shâstra to clear up the matter.
"Shruti-linga-vâkya-prakarana-sthânan-sama-âkhyânâm samavâye pâra-dourbalyam-artha-vipra-karshât"

[1] **Mīmāṃsā**, a Sanskrit word meaning "investigation", is the name of an *aastika* ("orthodox") school of Indian philosophy whose primary enquiry is into the nature of dharma based on close study of the theory and method of interpretation of the Vedas.

[2] **Jaimini** was an ancient sage, who was a great philosopher of the Mimansa school of Indian philosophy. He was the disciple of the great Rishi Veda Vyâs. Jaimini is famous for his great treatise Purva Mimamsa Sutras ("First Reflection"), or Karma-mimamsa ("Study of [Ritual] Action"), a system that investigates the nature of Vedic injunctions. The text founded the Purva-Mimamsa school of Ancient Indian philosophy, one of the six Darsanas or schools of Ancient Indian philosophy. Dated to the 3rd century BC, the text contains about 3,000 sutras and is the foundational text of the Mimamsa School. The text aims at an analysis of the Vedas with regard to ritual practice (karma) and religious duty (dharma), commenting on the early Upanishads. Jaimini's Mimamsa is a ritualist counter-movement to the mystic Vedanta currents of his day.

Meaning - "We can classify the scriptures as – Shruti, linga, vâkya, prakaran, sthân and samâkhya. They are in descending order of strength. This means that, the scriptures included in shruti are the strongest. Those included in the linga are weaker, prakaran are still weaker and so forth. If there are two contradictory terms in Shruti and prakaran, then the statement in the Shruti holds true, since *shrutyâ prakaranasya vâdhât* – Shruti holds good over prakaran.

The opposition has said there is no reason for Swayam Bahgavân to appear in the world, since His incarnations are enough to crush the evil forces and protect the good. So why should Sri Krishna appear in this material earth? And if He did appear, it must mean that He is an incarnation, right? Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has replied to this –

"Although Sri Krishna has been included in the incarnations, He has not appeared to deliver the earth from the burden of sinful elements like the incarnations. It is true that the incarnations of Purush perform such activities. Then why does Srimad-Bhâgavatam say that Sri Krishna has lessened the burden of the earth? It means that – when Swayam *Bhagavân* appears His incarnations too are present in Him. They deliver the earth from the burden of sins; Swayam *Bhagavân* simply gets the credit for this. We see in Chaitanya-Charitâmrita –

"It is the not Swayam *Bhagavân*'s job to take away the burden from the earth; it is Vishnu's function to maintain and protect the world. However when Sri Krishna descends, Vishnu merges with Him. Whenever complete *Bhagavân* descends, all the incarnations come and enter into Him. The incarnations such as Nârâyan, Chaturvyuha, Matsya and the Yug-avatârs, Manvantar-avatârs and all types of incarnations come and become one with Sri Krishna. He, the complete *Bhagavân* appears in this manner. Therefore, since Vishnu is present within Sri Krishna, He kills the asuras with Vishnu." – (C.C.)
Swayam *Bhagavân* Sri Krishna expresses indescribable sweetness through many human-like leelâs such as Janma-leelâ (the divine pastime of Birth), growing-up-leelâ etc. These leeâs are much sweeter and wonderful than the eternal leelâs. He manifests these pastimes all the time maintaining His individuality and divinity. Although Sri Krishna is Swayam Bahgavân, He appears in this material world out of His causeless mercy for us – that is the true reason for His appearance.

Factually, Sri Krishna is the root of all incarnations – the original God. Therefore, He does not depend on anyone while descending. He is entirely independent.

"ananyâ-pekshi yadrupam swayam-rupah sa uchyate"

Meaning - "'Swayam rup' or '**Original form**' is the one that is independent of others."

'Swayam rup' is famous in the scriptures as the form that does not rest on any other factor; it is eternally present in the eternal abode and even when it descends in the material world, it is entirely independent in the manifest and non-manifest leelâs. Sri Krishna's form is self-evident original form. Srimad-Bhâgavatam has described essentially this form as "*lavanya-sâram-asamorddham-ananya-siddham"* – the original form that is condensed *lâvanya,* unparalleled and non-exceeded.

"Sri Krishna's form resides in Brajadhâm. It is majestic and sweet. It is the abode of precious and divine qualities. Sri Krishna has given a part of His majesty and divinity to the incarnations since He is the whole and their source." – (C.C.)

Srimad-Bhâgavatam has mentioned the word 'Swayam' thrice in relation to Sri Krishna – viz., "*krishnastu Bhagavân swayam*", "*Swayam-twa-sâmyâtishayatryadheeshah*" and "*Swayam-eva-harih*". Thus He is loudly proclaiming Sri Krishna as Swayam *Bhagavân* just as one declares a pledge thrice.

Although the original Nârâyan and Sri Krishna are always non-different, when we perform a *ras*-analysis, Sri Krishna wins a landslide victory (as everyone will agree, even the opposition) –

siddhânta-tastwabhede'pi srisha-krishna-swarupayoh,
rasenotkrishyate krishnarupam-eshâ rasa-sthitih.

Sri Krishna is greater than original Nârâyan

Meaning - "Although the philosophists may differ in their opinions regarding the su*prem*acy of the avatârs, one has to concede that Sri Krishna contains *ras* in its most brilliant form and that *ras* verily exists in Sri Krishna."

"krishna-eva paro devastam dhyâyet tat raset" – Shruti

"mattah parataram nânyat kinchidasti dhananjayah" – (Gitâ)

"ishwarah paramah krishnah sachchidânanda vigrahah" –(Brahma-Samhitâ)

"krishnastu Bhagavân Swayam"- (Srimad-Bhâgavatam)

"gudhah param brahma-manushya-lingam" - (Srimad-Bhâgavatam)

Ras-science proclaims Sri Krishna as the Most Exalted.

"*raso vai sah*"

Meaning - "Sri *Bhagavân* is *ras* personified."– Shruti

Although Sri *Bhagavân* is the embodiment of *ras*, the divine forms manifest *ras* to different extent. Certain divine forms express certain *ras*. None of the incarnations exhibits all the *ras*. However, Sri Krishna is embodiment of all nectarine *ras*. All the *ras* are manifest in Him to the maximum degree. He has some special qualities that nourish *ras*, and He has monopoly over these qualities. No other divine form has the same sweet traits. The *Mahâ*jans call these attributes as 'mâdhurya' (sweetness). Sri Krishna is sweetness personified. He is infinite; His sweetness too is infinite. Yet, our reverend Goswâmis have classified it into four –

"We find the following four types of sweetness that is peculiar to Sri Vrajendranandan (Sri Krishna in Vrindâban) only and nowhere else. They are –

- Leelâ-mâdhuri - Sweet pastimes
- Preyâ-priyâdhikyam – sweet love for His dear ones
- Venu-mâdhuri – sweet flute
- Rupa-mâdhuri – sweet beauty"- (B.R.S.2.1.43)

Let us relish Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd's explanation of these sweetness.

He says – "*sarvâdbhuta-chamatkâra-leelâ-kallola-vâridhih"* – Sri *Bhagavân* is most extraordinarily wonderful. He is a surging ocean of divine pastimes. Sri *Bhagavân* is *rasamay*[1], and therefore he is *leelâmay*[2]. He expresses His *ras* through His leelâs. His pastimes are naturally sweet and wonderful – His Braja-leelâs are the topmost – they are incomparable! In Brajadhâm, He is indeed the rushing and gushing ocean of amazing leelâ-*ras*!

"Of all the pastimes of Sri Krishna, the human-like ones that He performs in human-like form are the best. He is dressed as a cowherd boy, holding the flute, in the threshold of youth and groomed like a great dancer. Thus He is well suited to perform human-like pastimes." – (C.C.)

The pastimes He performs as God do not express much sweetness, since they arouse awe and reverence in his devotees. On the other hand, if He behaves only as an ordinary human being, we will not take Him seriously; we may even land up thinking Him as material. However, when He displays both majestic and human-like mood side-by-side and create various amazing *ras*-

[1] Embodiment of *ras*
[2] Embodiment of *leelâ*

situations, the leelâs become all the more extraordinary. They are contradictory to each other; therefore, they prove and enhance His majestic appeal.

The philosophical Shrutis present Sri *Bhagavân* in particular manner, while Leelâ-shakti paints Him in breathtaking colors! Sri *Bhagavân*'s inconceivable powers beautifully harmonize all contradictory features. According to the Shrutis He is *âtmârâm, âptakâm,* continuous and complete, whereas in the playground of Leelâ, the same One is hungry, thirsty, human-like and craving for devotees' love.

How do we explain His actions? On one hand He is all-knowing, on the other hand He is ignorant, He is infinite, yet limited. He is simultaneously almighty and afraid, and above all He is *âtmârâm*, yet indulges in lovemaking. The only answer is – He is inconceivable. Although Leelâ-*ras* is based on philosophy, while relishing *ras*, we should separate the two. Philosophy says Sri *Bhagavân* is free of desires; He is without any feeling whatsoever. In leelâ, He is thirsty for *ras*. He indulges in Leelâ so much that he becomes Leelâ-Purushottam, only to quench His thirst for *ras*. This is the only reason why Mother Yashoda can bind the all-pervading and omni-present Sri Hari with a rope. All the saints glorify His feet and yet He feels grateful while carrying Nanda Bâbâ's shoes. That almighty Being joyously carries Shridâm on his shoulders after the latter defeats him in a game. Although Sri Hari is the most worshiped *Tattva,* He stands like a beggar holding the ends of His upper cloth (placed round His neck), most apologetic, at the door of *mânini* Sri Râdhâ's kunja and begging "*dehi-pada-pallavam-udâram"* ! He most joyously holds Srimati's feet on His head!! If we think how Leelâ-shakti is carrying away Sri *Bhagavân* like a wooden puppet floating in the flow of *ras*, we cannot help but be amazed – as if the all knowing, almighty Sri *Bhagavân* has lost control over Himself. How? Is it due to *Mâyâ* or *Leelâ? We know that-*

"krishna surjya-sama mâyâ ghor andhakâr,
Jâhân krishna tâhân nâhi mâyâr adhikâr."

Meaning - "Sri Krishna is like the brilliant sun while Mâyâ is pitch darkness; where Krishna exists, Mâyâ cannot be present.) – (C.C.)

Sri *Bhagavân* is stupefied by His leelâ. And Râs-leelâ is the crest-jewel of all all pastimes – Sri *Bhagavân* loses Himself in its extraordinary brilliant *ras*!

Sri Krishna has said –
"Although all my pastimes in Vrindâban are enchanting, yet whenever I remember the Râs-leelâ, I don't know what happens to me – I cannot express it." – (S.B.)

Sri *Bhagavân* is blissful; however, the Râsleelâ makes Him so much exultant that He loses Himself! Shruti says – Sri *Bhagavân* is complete. The One Who is complete cannot decrease or increase. Then how is it possible that His exultation reaches dizzy heights? After all, since He is complete, His joy is also complete, is it not so? But we cannot harbor such doubts when we relish leelâ, since euphoria is Leelâ's characteristic. Srimad-Bhâgavatam has clearly described Sri Krishna's extreme beauty during the Râs-leelâ –

"During the Râs-leelâ Sri *Bhagavân* Devaki-suta[1] was dazzling like an exquisite emerald amidst the golden Gopis". – (S.B.10.33.6)

What an enchanting combination of place, time and people! Blissful Vrindâban dhâm is all aglow with beauty; it is a full moon night; the sky is lit with moonlight – drops of serene moon rays are falling constantly from the sky – Mother Nature is smiling all over – soft fragrant breeze is dancing away, rocking the hearts of Mallikâ and Mâlati; the woodlands are laden with sweet-scented flowers. Jâti, Juthi, Mallikâ and Mâlati are bowing lovingly in each kunja. Ohh! How sweetly the bees are humming, the cuckoo is cooing and the peacocks are dancing. *Kumud*, lotus and *kahlâr* have bloomed in the bosom of the blue Yamunâ! And the bees are sporting lovingly in the sweet *ras* of their heart! The dark water of the Yamunâ is sparkling with moonlight! The Yamunâ appears

[1] Son of Devaki; here Devaki refers to Mother Yashodâ, since Devaki is one of her names.

as if she is going on *abhisâr* dressed in a dark blue sâri with gold border – she is going dancing with the heroines of the Râs-dance and she is rushing to her husband, the sea, with the message of Râsbihari Sri Krishna's sweet Râs-leelâ. Ohh! The extremely sweet Râs-vilâs on that green bank of blue Yamuna!! Rasa-râj Shyâmsundar is dancing in circle with countless *Mahâbhâv*s. One Krishna in between two Gopis! The entire creation is luminescent with extraordinary brilliance! There are so many tunes, so many lyrics, so many rhythms and so many râgs and râginis!! How fantastic! That sweetness is mesmerizing!! The anklets are chiming musically all around and the quarters are resounding with the jingling of waist-bells. The *rabâb, muraj* and flute are keeping harmony with them. The bewitching crown prince, decked in an enticing garland is absorbed in the pleasure of dancing with the su*prem*ely beautiful cowherd belles!! Sripâd Shuka Muni has described the very sweet Râs-leelâ only here, in Vrindâban. We do not find this Leelâ in any other dhâm, in any other *swarup*. Had it been there, certainly some saint or the other would have mentioned it in his realization. The shâstras would have stated it. But it is not there. This is why Sri Vrindâban-Chandra's leelâs are the sweetest – they are incomparable.

Srimat Rupa Goswâmipâd has described the sweet love of the associates as –"*atulya-madhura-prema-mandita-priya-mandalah"* – the dear associates of Brajadhâm are full of remarkable sweet love. The Brijwâsis' love is free of desires and pure. It is without the slightest whiff of majesty and is full of pristine pure sweetness. Majesty evokes awe and reverence; it chokes the jubilation of love. Love loves informality; as soon as formality steps in, it breaks the heart of Love. Therefore, if we want to make *Bhagavân* as our near and dear one, we have to bind Him with the strong bond of love. We have to tie Him in such a way that He can never loosen it. The bhakta and *Bhagavân* who are in Braja-love float in sweetness and hug each other tightly – this is the specialty of Braja-love! There is no feeling of high and low, love breaks all boundary and amalgamates the hearts of Sri Krishna and the Braja-lovers as one! In Vrindâban the Ganga of love has branched into innumerable distributaries, raising waves upon waves and rushing towards the infinity! It is due to this sweet love that Mother Yashodâ has petted, nourished, beaten and scolded Sri Krishna with maternal feeling. The sakhâs have fed Him with their *uchchhishtha.* The Gopis have heaped hundreds of abuses on Him in love-anger. What to do? After all this is what makes Him happy. Srila Krishnadâs Kavirâj Goswâmi has quoted Sri Krishna as saying –

"Mother ties me as her son; she nourishes and pets me considering me as nothing. The sakhâs climb on my shoulder in pure friendly mood – they seem to say, "What makes you think you are richer than us? You and we are equals." If my sweetheart sulks and insults me – it steals my heart more than Vedic hymns." – (C.C.)

Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhav's love for each other is the topmost. It is the sweetest. It is unparalleled. Both are caught tightly in the snare of love. They enjoy so many innumerable *ras*-sports and various forms of lovemaking day after day! No one could ever fathom such *ras*-sports anywhere in Vaikuntha, Dwârakâ or Mathurâ. It is beyond the imagination of the munis and rishis. Only Swayam *Bhagavân* can conceive it. He plans new *ras*-thoughts daily. His mind is unlimited – so are His ideas. Srimat Rupa Goswâmipâd has written about one day –

sanketi-krita-kokilâdi-ninadam kamsa-dwisho krvato
dwâronmochana-lolashankha-balaya-kwânam muhuh shrinvatah,
keyam keyam iti pragalbha-jarati-vâkyena dunâtmano
râdhâ-prângana-kona-koli-vitapi-krode gatâ sharvari."
– (Ujjwal-Neelmani)

Explanation **–** It was a dark night of New Moon. There was pin drop silence all around. It was so dark that you would not be able to see the path. On such a night a young adolescent walked slowly on the way to Yâvat and reached Abhimanyu's house. A huge Koli tree stood in from. It was very dark under its thick foliage. You would not notice anything from a distance. The intruder carefully tiptoed in like a thief and stood beneath the tree. Looks like all the inmates are sleeping! After all who would remain awake in the dead of night? Everyone was asleep. The youngster looked around Him once. He understood, true, no one is awake. He caught the opportunity to call out a signal – "Coooo! Coooo!" Inside the house a beautiful young girl was just waiting for this signal. As soon as she tried to open the door and step out, Her bangles jingled; Her mother-in-

law, who was in the adjacent room could not get sleep. She was awake with worry. Her new daughter-in-law was exceedingly pretty, while that son of Nanda was an enormous flirt. He was always running behind the Gopa-brides. No one knows what bad incident may occur. Therefore mother and daughter guarded Her day and night. So when the bangles jingled, the old lady immediately screamed – "Who's there? Who's there? Who made that sound, Boumâ[1]?' The young girl's heart trembled. She silently closed the door and shrank back. On the other hand, the youth too got scared and hid further behind the Koli tree. A longtime passed. There was no sound anywhere. The silence of that dark night was so grave that you would be certain that no one was awake. Hence once again there was a cry – "Cooo! Cooo!" Priyâji heard the signal and opened the door. But alas! Once more the old lady's voice roared – "Who…who dares to open the door?" Promptly the two agitated hearts crept back in fear. Thus, the whole night passed in cooing, opening the door and immediately the old woman's thunderous roar! Soon the eastern horizon turned pink. The youth returned to Nandagram with a heart broken with the pangs of *viraha*. My dear emotional devotees, by now you must have recognized the youth? He is the very same "*satyam gyânam-anantam brahma*[2]" and "*raso vai sah*[3]" of Vedânta, "*ishwarah paramah krishnah-sach-chidânanda vigrahah, anâdirâdir govinda sarva-kârana-kâranam*[4]*"* of Brahma-Samhitâ. He is the One Whom Bhagavad-Gitâ proclaims as "*loke vede cha prârthitah purushottamah*" and Srimad-Bhâgavatam declares as "*krishnastu Bhagavân swayam".* And who is the young belle? Well, She is none other than '*vishnor-atyanta-vallabhâ*[5]*'* of Padma-purân, '*Shriyah-kântâ*[6]*'* of Brahma-Samhitâ, '*devi krishnamayi proktâ râdhikâ para-devatâ'* of Nârad-Pancharâtra and '*anayârâdhito nunam Bhagavân haririshwarah'* of Srimad-Bhâgavatam. No other associate of Braja has been able to arouse such high waves of desire in the heart of the ocean like Sachchidânanda. Therefore Srimati Râdhârâni is the topmost in sweet love. He is Rasa-râj while She is *Mahâbhâv*. The *ras* is endless and so is the *bhâv*. There is nothing sweeter than the love of Madan-mohan and Madan-mohan-mohini in the divine world.

As for *venu-mâdhuri*, Srimat Rupa Goswâmipâd's statement is – '*trijagan-mânasâkarshi-murali-kala-kujitah*'- the sweet notes of Sri Krishna's flute attract the three worlds. His flute drives the whole universe crazy. The maddening flute plays only in Vrindâban.

"*madhur madhur bamshi bâje ei to brindâban*"

Meaning - "Where the sweet sweet flute plays, that is Vrindâban."

"*shabdamayam venum vâdayantam mukhâmbuje"*

Meaning - "The flute that is the Shabda-Brahman plays on Sri Krishna's lips."

That song, that strain, that resonance is a grand opulence of the divine realm. That magnificence transforms everything into nectar. Srimad-Bhâgavatam says –

"*aspandanam gatimatâm pulakastarunâm*"

Meaning - "The song of the flute stupefies the moving and the trees experience goose bumps."
The waves of this strain turns everything topsy-turvy. The song intoxicates all creation – it astounds and overwhelms the fourteen worlds.
"The song of the flute rushed through all the worlds, stopping the clouds in their courses, astounding Gandharvarâj tumburu, breaking the samâdhi of the Four Kumârs, amazing Brahmâji, agitating King Bali and making him restless, sending Nâg-râj dizzy and pierced the envelope of the universe."

[1] A loving address for a daughter-in-law.
[2] The Su*preme* Being is Truth, Knowledge and Infinite.
[3] The Su*preme* Being is *ras* personified.
[4] Sri Krishna is the Su*preme* controller and His form is eternal, conscious and blissful. He is without a beginning and He is the beginning of everything; Govinda is the cause of all causes.
[5] The dearest beloved of Lord Vishnu
[6] The Lord's Beloved Who is opulence personified

Sri Brahma-Samhitâ says – "*atha venu-ninâdasya trayimurtimayi gatih"*

Meaning - "When the flute plays it expresses the 'trayi-murti'"

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained the word '*trayimurti'* as 'Vedmâtâ Gâyatri'. This means that Gâyatri *Mantra* is resounding in every strain of the flute; it is driving away all material desires, awakens devotion and drags the devotee towards the path to Braja. This is the nature of the beautiful song of the flute. Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says –

"The song of the flute travels in all directions, and piercing the envelope of the universe, enters Vaikuntha. It forces its entry into all the ears. It maddens all and forcibly drags everyone, especially the young maidens. The song is most impudent – it breaks the vow of chastity and drags a woman from the lap of her husband. It attracts the Laxmis of Vaikuntha – what to speak of the Gopis?" – (C.C.)

It is evident from the following statement of the pure-hearted Gopis –

"O Beloved, is there any woman in the three worlds whom the sweet song of the flute will not verily mesmerize, break her vow of chastity and force her to surrender at Your feet?" – (C.C.)

When Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu, Who is absorbed in the *bhâv* of a Gopi, heard this verse from His Holiness Swarup-dâmodar, he relished in the following manner –
"Sweetheart, tell us for sure – in the three worlds is there any worthy woman whom Your flute does not attract? The song of Your flute is like an enchantress weaving black magic all around and stealing women's hearts. It increases their agitation, which is already great, forces them to forsake the rules of the Aryan society and makes them surrender unto You.

You use Your flute to compel them to give up righteousness; its melody pierces their heart like the arrows of the Love-god and destroys their decency and fear. Now, how dare You show anger upon us and accuse us of forsaking our husbands? How virtuous are You that You are teaching us propriety? You hide something in Your heart while You speak another thing and behave in a third manner – all these are the features of a deceit. Your joke is killing us. Better get rid of your cunning ways." – (C.C.)

"On hearing the sweet song of Your flute even once, all the women's heart turn and twist. Their skirt-strings loosen; they become His slaves and rush to Krishna like crazed women. Even Laxmi Thâkurâni[1], after hearing the commotion made by these women, come to Krishna in expectation. However she deos not get His association and in stead her thirst increases. She performs austerity, yet does not succeed in her endeavor." - (C.C.)

Sri Krishna is Leelâmay Leelâ-Purushottam and Vrindâban is the playground of His leelâ. The flute plays an immense role in leelâ. It is inexpressibly sweet and its nature is inconceivable. Its sweetness verily inebriates three worlds – then what to speak of the Brijwâsis? Is it surprising that the flute will drown them in its nectarine deluge?

The mellifluous notes of the flute give a special message to each person. It arouses different *bhâvs* in every devotee – such is its magic!
"Mother Yashomati hears the flute telling her to give butter, while father Nanda hears – 'Papa, here I am bringing your shoes'. The sakhâs hear- 'Come let us go to the pastures' and Kamalini[2] (Râdhârâni) hears – 'Come out, dear Râi'." – (C.C.)
You will not find this sweetness anywhere other than in Vrindâban. Venu-mâdhuri is the extraordinary wealth of Vrindâban alone. This sweetness make Vrindavan-vihâri Sri Krishna more exalted than the original Nârâyan, although the latter is the Master of *Mahâ*-Vaikuntha.

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[2] The One with

Sripâd Rupa Goswâmipâd has described Sri Krishna's sweet beauty with *'asamânorddha-rupa-shri-vismâpita-charâcharah'* – Sri Krishna's fantastic sweet beauty astounds all moving and non-moving elements of the universe. Sri Krishna is sweetness personified. His *rupa-mâdhuri* is immense and incomparable. Srila Uddhav *Mahâ*shay has said –

"Sri Krishna's internal potency is called Yogmâyâ. He wished to display her immense power and therefore He expressed His su*preme*ly handsome two-handed form in this world. He looks extremely attractive with His flute and He is full of wonderful sweetness. This form is most suited for His leelâs in the material world. In fact, He is so captivating that it astounds even Him. He too feels like relishing His beauty. He is enormously gorgeous, most remarkable and the beauty constantly increases in spite of being unlimited. The transcendental body of Krishna is so beautiful that it beautifies the ornaments He wears. Therefore, we see that Krishna's body is the ornament of ornaments. " – (S.B.3.2.12)

Srila Krishnadâs Kavirâj Goswâmi has written in Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita that Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has relished the above verse and has expressed it brilliantly to Srila Sanâtan Goswâmi –

"The most exquisite of all the Leelâs are His (Sri Krishna's) pastimes in the human-like form. He is a budding youth, dressed as a cowherd boy, exceedingly well groomed and holding a flute. These are well suited for human-like pastimes.

Hear O Sanâtan, about Krishna's sweet beauty – a drop of which drowns all creation and attracts all beings. He wished to display the prowess of Yogmâyâ, His internal potency, and therefore He expressed in the world this gem of a beauty, that was hitherto known only to His confidential devotees. It was hidden in the spiritual world and the devotees cherished it like a precious wealth (however now, it was revealed to all).

He is so gorgeous that it astounds even Him. When He beholds Himself, He too wishes to enjoy His body. He is Fortune personified and possesses all excellent qualities. This beauty resides eternally in Him. Every part of His body is so attractive that it beautifies the ornaments it wears. Moreover, His stylish tribhanga pose is doubly attractive. Add to it His dancing eyebrows that shoot arrows with sidelong glances – and they determinedly pierce the heart of Râdhârâni and the other Gopis." –(C.C.)

We find the description of Sri Krishna's sweet beauty originally in Srimad-Bhâgavatam.

"gopyas-tapah kim-acharan yadamushya rupam
lâvanya-sâram-asamorddham-ananya-siddham,
drigbhih pivanty-anusavâbhi-navam durâpam
ekânta-dhâma yashasah shriya aishwarasya."

Sri Krishna's sweetness attracted Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu so much that it immersed Him in love. He held Srila Sanâtan Goswâmi's hand and quoted the loving women of Mathura. He also rendered a charming explanation of the same.

"Sri Krishna's youth is like a fathomless ocean, in which extreme *lâvanya* play like waves. In that great ocean is the whirlpool of the awakening of various *bhâvs*. The vibration of Krishna's flute is like a whirlwind, while the hearts of the Gopis are like straws and leaves. Once they fall in the whirlwind, they most certainly drown and lose all chance to rise again (they are fixed eternally at the lotus feet of Krishna)".

"O my dear sakhi[1], what severe austerities have the Gopis performed to drink His extremely sweet beauty through their eyes to their heart's content? By doing so, they glorify their birth, body and mind.

[1] Since Sriman-Mahâprabhu is in Gopi-*bhâv* and He is considers Sanâtan Goswâmi also as a Manjari

Krishna's sweetness is unparalleled. It is so ravishing that no one – not even His swarup, that is, Lord Nârâyan of *Paravyom* Who is the source of all the incarnations, has equal or greater sweetness.

Even the dearest consort of Nârâyan, the goddess of fortune, who is worshiped by all chaste women, is captivated by the incomparable sweetness of Krishna. She forsook everything to enjoy Krishna, and taking a great vow, she performed severe austerity.

Krishna is the essence of all sweetness - there is no perfection above it. He is the inexhaustible mine of all nectarine qualities. He has lent a part of His excellences to His other manifestations wherever and whoever they may be." – (C.C.)

"This divinely sweet form (of Krishna) resides in Brajadhâm alone, which is the abode of majesty, sweetness and jewel-like immaculate qualities. The opulence of other divine forms is merely a reflection of Krishna's excellences. They gain their divinity from Him. Krishna is the fountainhead and is the protector of all." – (C.C.**)**

Srimad-Bhâgavatam states that Ramâ Devi, the Lady of Vaikuntha was attracted by Sri Krishna's sweet beauty and performed austerity to attain His association. Thus it is evident that Sri Krishna's *rupa-mâdhuri* is more *ras*-ful and wonderful. We also learn that although Sri Krishna displayed the two-handed form of Nârâyan to the Gopikâs, He was unable to win them over. Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita describes –

Sri Krishna steals Laxmi Devi's heart because He is Swayam *Bhagavân*, however Nârâyan cannot captivate the Gopikâs. What to speak of the real Nârâyan, once Sri Krishna, Who is much more handsome than Nârâyan disguised Himself as the latter and tried to fool the Gopis by displaying a four-handed form. Yet He was unable to arouse any feeling in them. Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says –

"Krishna steals Laxmi Devi's heart because He is Swayam *Bhagavân*, however Nârâyan does not have this effect on the Gopikâs. Krishna tried to tease them by disguising as Nârâyan and manifested a four-handed form, but it did not impress the Gopis, nor were they interested." - (C.C.)

We can easily decipher that Sri Nârâyan is not as handsome as Sri Krishna. He captivates everybody right from the Nâg-patnis[1] to Sri Laxmi Devi and from the material world up to the Vaikuntha planets – this is why He is 'Krishna' (the All-attractive). His nature is to delight all *chittas* with His delighting-shakti and attract them to Him. Therefore the *Mahâ*jan has said –

"Sri Krishna is the transcendental youthful Love-god of Vrindâban, Who is worshiped with Kâm-beej and Kâm-Gâyatri. He attracts every *chitta* – be it man, woman, the moving or the non-moving. He is so enthralling that He agitates even the Love-god." – (C.C.)

The Gopikâs sighed on the night of Râs – "O Darling, You are the most handsome One in the three worlds. Your sweet beauty makes the cows gaze transfixed at Your face. The birds such as parrots perch on the branches and meditate on Your beauty with their eyes closed, like the Munis. The trees and creepers express goose bumps by sprouting buds and shed tears in the form of honey. The deer are stupefied in ecstasy and remain still like a picture." – (S.B.)

The Gopikâs are full of *anurâg.* Hence Shyâmsundar's beauty appears all the more stupendous. Thâkur Srila Vidyâpati has quoted Srimati Râdhârâni during *purvarâg* –
"Dear sakhi, do you know, what I saw? It was remarkable! When you hear it, you will feel I must have seen a dream (it is so unreal!). I saw a pair of lotuses[2] wearing a garland of moons[3]. Upon

[1] The wives of Kâliya Nâg
[2] Sri Krishna's lotus-like feet
[3] Sparkling toe-nails

them a young Tamâl tree[1] stood with a golden creeper[2] entwining it. This combination was strolling on the banks of the Kâlindi. A moon[3] arose on the top of the tree with two newly sprouting leaves[4] – they were pink like the dawn. A couple of *bimba* fruits[5] had manifested on that moon and a parrot[6] was perching motionless on them. It was topped with a pair of restless *Khanjan*[7] birds covered with a cluster of serpentess[8] crowned with a peacock[9].

O my friend Rangini, I am using code words - however when I looked again, I fainted. Poet Vidyâpati says, O Radhe, You are an expert at describing masculine beauty!"

And then sometimes She says –

"Oh I saw something so wonderful – He was sweetness personified – the essence of love-*ras*. I feel it is matchless in the three worlds. He is bewitching with His hair pulled up and the chandan dot on His forehead. His face is as exquisite as the full moon and it is a snare for the whole world. He is bright like a fresh rain cloud, full of erotic *ras* and His complexion is dark, smooth and glossy. He is decked in silver, gold, gems and pearls. His joined eyebrows - heaven knows who created them - are arched and attractive like the *kâmân* (bow) of Kâmdev. On top of this, with His passionate eyes He darts sidelong glances like the flower-arrows of the Love-god, which are more fatal than the poison ones."

We do not get such beautiful description of any divine form other than that of Sri Krishna. The surging waves of His lovely beauty drown the readers' *chitta*. As a result whenever they wanted to describe male beauty, almost all the great poets have accepted Sri Krishna as their model, since no one else has such sweetness in his lips, serenity in smile, nectarine dew drops in speech, soothing gaze and hitherto unparalleled song of the flute. Sri Krishna is matchless in the *ras* of beauty, stylish of attire, graceful gestures and movement, and He is the ever-charming hero!

Sri Krishna, the Ocean of Beauty gives rise to inebriated waves and no one can beat poet Jaydev in raising those waves to dizzy heights and then plunge our hearts in it. Also composer Govinda dâs is no less in this matter. He has tried his level best to give us a clear picture of Sri Krishna's *rupa-mâdhuri*. His poetry is so sweet that we feel as if we can see the extremely handsome Sri Krishna right in front of us.

"His youthful *lâvanya* is pouring onto the earth and flowing away while the dancing waves of his soft smile make the Love-god faint in ecstasy. Who is this lover-boy and at what unfortunate moment did I behold Him that I lost all my control? Ever since, my heart is agitated and I know not why it bleeds so. He does not walk, He dances – His body swaying in laughter ! His sidelong glances dart poisonous arrows that charge to pierce our hearts.

Inebriated black bees sing, hover and fall on the garland of Mâlati flowers that sways on His bosom. The chandan dot on His forehead sends sparks that hit the center of my heart. I don't know what disease I have caught – I am so ashamed to reveal it to anyone. A woman's heart is so hard that it continues to beat even under such drastic situation! Poet Govinda dâs says – I really do not know what will happen now."

What a wonderful description! Beauty and *ras* have mingled to create bliss!! Sri Lilâshuk is another poet who is excellent at portraying Sri Krishna's beauty. Sometimes in the throes of *bhâv*, he has gushed – Sri Krishna is an extraordinary Object! And sometimes he has eulogized – Sri Krishna is remarkable effulgence! Yet again he has called Sri Krishna 'a transcendental bliss'. After

[1] Dark-complexioned body
[2] Golden-yellow dhoti
[3] Sri Krishna'ssweet and radiant full moon like face
[4] Pink eye-lids
[5] Pink lips
[6] nose
[7] eyes
[8] hair
[9] Peacock-feather

labeling Him an 'Object' He has added a smile to it; He has called Him 'effulgence' and then crowned Him with peacock feathers; He has termed Him as 'bliss' and then arranged a sweet flute on the lips of that 'bliss'. How sweet is his *bhâv*! How lofty is his language!! Ultimately he has lost himself in the *anurâg* of Sri Krishna's beauty – all he could utter was '*madhuram madhuram*'.

"*madhuram madhuram vapurasya vibhor-*
madhuram madhuram vadanam madhuram
madhu-gandhi madhusmitam-etad-aho
madhuram madhuram madhuram madhuram."

- (Sri Krishna-Karnâmritam.92)

Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has relished this verse and has explained it with His sweet lips –

"Krishna is like a delicious sweet dish with a sweet filling of *lâvanya*. It is sweeter than sweet. His nectarine moon like face is sweeter than that, so it is sweeter than sweeter than sweet. When He smiles, it scatters moonbeams all around – it is sweeter than His face – therefore it is sweeter than sweeter than sweeter than sweet. A single drop of this sweetness transverses three worlds and the sweet filling spreads all around." – (C.C.)

Sri Krishna's *leelâ-mâdhuri, prem-mâdhuri, venu-mâdhuri* and *rupa-mâdhuri* – this four-fold sweetness are extraordinary. Sri Krishna expresses these to the maximum extent. As a result, shrutis, smritis and great saints have extolled Vrajendranandan Sri Krishna as Swayam *Bhagavân*.

Fitting reply to all the opponents of Sri Krishna being *Swayam Bhagavân*

Great scriptures such as Srimad-Bhagavad-Gitâ and Srimad-Bhâgavatam prove that Sri Krishna is Swayam *Bhagavân*, yet some statements appear to be contradictory also. The good devotees need to know how to resolve them with one another. *Mahâ*râj Parikshit has asked Sri Shukadev right in the beginning of the tenth *skandha* of Srimad-Bhâgavatam -

yadoshcha dharmasheelasya nitarâm munisattama,
*tatr**âmshena**-avatirnasya vishnorviryâni shamsa nah.*

"O greatest of sages, please describe to me the glory of Sri Krishna Who appeared **as *amsha* (part / incarnation)** in the lineage of the most righteous King Yadu." - (S.B.10.12)
"The devatâs told Devaki –

*Drishtyâmba te kukshi-gatah parah pumân**amshena***
sâkshâd-bhagavân bhavâya nah

Dear mother, the Su*preme* Personality has appeared **as amsha (part / incarnation)** in your womb for our welfare." – (S.B.10.2.41)

There are many such statements in Srimad-Bhâgavatam that prove Sri Krishna an incarnation – but only apparently. However Sridhar Swâmipâd, the foremost preceptor of Srimad-Bhâgavatam explains that although some characters in the text (for example Nanda *Mahâ*râj) have made these statements, Srimad-Bhâgavatam does not affirm them – they are not Srimad-Bhâgavatam's personal opinion. Srimad-Bhâgavatam cannot contradict Himself (*krishnastu bhagavân swayam)*. The wise scholar is one who explains a scripture by resolving apparently contradictory statements in the scriptures.

Let us return to *Mahâ*râj Parikshit's question. Here the âchâryas explain that 'amshena' does not mean 'as an amsha', but according to Sanskrit Grammar, 'amshena' also means 'with an amsha'. If we accept the latter meaning, then the statement stands as – "O greatest of sages, please describe to me the glory of Sri Krishna Who appeared **with *amsha* (Lord Balarâm)** in the lineage of the most righteous King Yadu."

Similarly the intention of the devatâs too would change – "Dear mother, the Su*preme* Personality has appeared **with amsha (here 'amsha' means 'shakti' or His potency)** in your womb for our welfare."

*Mahâ*râj Nanda has said - "I consider Krishna **amsha (part)** of Sri Nârâyan." – (S.B.10.26.23)

This is strictly Nanda *Mahâ*râj's personal opinion and NOT that of Srimad-Bhâgavatam.

In the same way, we find the word 'kalâ' (part of the part of the Su*preme* Being) with reference to Sri Krishna.

"'kalâ' means 'part of the part'" – (C.C.)

"*vabhou bhuh pakva-shasyâdhyâ* ***kalâbhyâm*** *nitarâm hareh".*
– *(*S.B.10.20)

This verse seemingly means – "The earth looked extremely exuberant with rich and golden crops, to welcome Sri Krishna and Baladev Who appeared as Sri Hari's **kalâ**."

This meaning of the above verse indicates that the speaker of Srimad-Bhâgavatam is once declaring Sri Krishna as 'swayam *Bhagavân*' and in the same breath he is stating Him as 'part of a part'. Has Vyâsdev gone mad? Definitely not. In truth, following the rules of Sanskrit grammar, we can break the word 'kalâbhyâm' into 'kalâ' and 'âbhyâm'. 'kalâ' means 'the earth' and 'âbhyâm' means 'by Sri Krishna-Balarâm'. Now the entire sentence conveys - "The earth was extremely beautified with rich and golden crops, by (the appearance of) Sri Krishna and balarâm."

If we accept this meaning then the scripture does not contradict itself. The preceptors too support explanations that resolve seemingly inconsistent statements. We see in Srimad-Bhâgavatam (10.89.58) –

"dwijâtmajâ me yuvayodidrikshunâ,
mayopanitâ bhuvi dharma-guptaye,
kalâvatirnou*-avanerbharâsurân*
hatveha bhuyastarayetamanti me."

The superficial meaning of this verse is – "Bhumâ-purush is telling Sri Krishna and Arjun – I wanted to see you, therefore I brought the Brahmin-children here. Both of you have appeared as my '*kalâ*' (parts) to protect righteousness. Kill the *asuras* who are a burden to the earth and return quickly to me."

This translation disagrees with some other verses of Srimad-Bhâgavatam that propounds Sri Krishna as 'Swayam *Bhagavân*'. Hence no *âchârya* has accepted this meaning. They have broken '*kalâvatirnou*' into '*kalâ*' (=earth, which is a part of His part) and '*avatirnou*' (=descended) so that the verse gains the right connotation – "I wanted to see you; therefore I brought the Brahmin-children here. Both of you have descended **on** my 'kalâ' (earth) to protect righteousness. Kill the *asuras* who are a burden on the earth and return **them** quickly to me." This is the real meaning of the verse.

Bhumâ-purush was craving to get *Swayam Bhagavân* Sri Krishna's *darshan,* since He is beauty and sweetness personified. However it is impossible for Bhuma-purush to bring Sri Krishna from Dwâraka to *Mahâ*kâlpur and behold Him. He knows that Sri Krishna is '*brahmanyadev'* – He can do anything to help a Brahmin. Therefore to satisfy his intense desire to behold Sri Krishna he had kidnapped the Brahmin-children.

"*viprârtham-eshyate krishno* ***nâ****gachchhed-****anyathâ*** *twiha'.* – (Harivamsha)[1]

[1] Harivamsa Purân and Mahabhârat are complementary to each other.
Harivamsa especially describes the pastimes of the Su*preme* Lord that took place after the battle at Kuruksetra, including His pastimes of disappearance. Harivamsa is considered a supplement of Mahabharata.

Meaning – "Sri Krishna went because of the brahmin, otherwise He would not have gone there."

This indicates that Bhumâ-purush cannot force Sri Krishna to do anything; he is dependent on Sri Krishna's wish. He desires Sri Krishna's darshan and whether he will get darshan or not depends on Sri Krishna's wish; these factors prove that Bhumâ-purush is a part and Sri Krishna is the source.

Especially the story of Bhumâ-purush belongs to the 'âkhyân[1]' category, while '*krishnastu Bhagavân swayam'* is Shruti. Shruti is impartial and stronger than *âkhyân.* When two statements in the scriptures seemingly contradict each other, we are to accept what the stronger category says – this is the rule of Mimânsâ philosophy. Therefore whatever an *âkhyân* may say, '*krishnastu Bhagavân swayam'* is an extremely forceful statement and it is bound to defeat all else.

Our opponents put forth another argument – Sri Krishna has payed obeisance to Bhumâ-purush, therefore he is greater than Sri Krishna. Although we agree that one who pays obeisance has a lower status, we cannot use the same logic here. Sri Krishna paid obeisance because He was playing the role of a human being. It is a part of His transcendental pastime. Why, Sri Krishna has paid obeisance to Nârad Muni, Govardhan Mountain, the sun, and the fire - so does it mean they are all greater than He? Lord Râmchandra has extolled the sea and has paid obeisance, does that make the sea more exalted than Lord Râm? Actually these activities are parts of the sweet human like leelâs and them all the more charming.

One more point – the Nârâyan that Arjun had seen in *Mahâ*kâlpur was eight-handed. According to Nârâyan-tattva, four-handed Nârâyan is greater than the eight-handed form. We see in Brahmaji's glorification – *"nârâyano'ngam narabhujalâyanât"* - he clearly described the four-handed Nârâyan as Sri Krishna's part.

Our opponents also quote scriptures such as Vishnu Purân to prove that Sri Krishna is Lord Nârâyan's 'kesh-avatâr' (incarnation of hair). There is a story in Sri Vishnu Puran, Harivamsha and *Mahâ*bhârat. It says when the devatâs prayed to Kshirodakashâyi Vishnu to remove the burden of the earth He had drawn two 'kesh' (hairs) from his head – one black and the other white. These two hairs appeared as Sri Krishna and Balarâm in the Yadu dynasty to save the earth. However, here the word *kesh* cannot possibly mean 'hair' since Lord Nârâyan is ever-young and is beyond the effect of time. How can he possess white hair? Here, 'kesh' means 'effulgence'. Sri Krishna Himself has said –

"amshavo ye prakâshante te mama kesha-sangitâh, sarvagyâh keshavam tasmân mâmâhurmunisattamâh." – (*Mahâ*bhârat)

Meaning - "'kesh' is the mass of effulgence that emanate from me. As a result the sages call me 'Keshav'."

This is why Kshirodakashâyi Nârâyan pointed to the two rays – one dark and the other bright to imply that Sri Krishna, Who is dark-complexioned and Balarâm Who is fair, would descend on earth. They would be effulgent. By indicating to the rays over his head, he also proclaimed that this time Swayam *Bhagavân*, Who is my Master and the overlord of all incarnations would appear. Hence you need not worry any more about saving the earth.

Sri Vyâsdev is very much in his right sense and does not contradict himself. It is just that we do not understand these verses in their right perspective. There is another way to resolve the seemingly conflicting statements –

Harivamsa consists of about sixteen thousand verses; it was first recited by the great sage, Vaisampayan, to King Janamejaya. In that assembly, Ugrasrava or Sauti was also present. Later on, by the request of the sages at Naimisaranya, headed by Saunak, Sauti again recited the Harivamsa Purân.

[1] story

"Some say Sri Krishna is verily Sri Nara-Nârâyan, while others say that He is indeed Lord Vâman; still others say that Sri Krishna is the incarnation of Kshirodakashâyi Vishnu. Nothing is impossible – everyone is speaking the truth – for, Sri Krishna is the source of all incarnations. When He descends on the earth all His portions come and merge into Him. Whichever form one worships, one says Sri Krishna is that divine form. Everything is possible with Sri Krishna - have no doubt about it." – (C.C.)

Sri Radha-Tattva-Vigyaan

(A Scientific Study of Sri Râdhâ)

Sri Râdhâ is the absolute power

In 'A Scientific Study of God' we have learnt about the internal potency of Sri *Bhagavân*. Hlâdini shakti or Blissful potency is the greatest internal potency. Srimati Râdhârâni is Hlâdini Shakti personified. Sri Krishna is Swayam *Bhagavân*; hence He is absolutely powerful. Srimati Râdhârâni is the crest-jewel of all His beloveds – therefore She is the absolute Shakti. She is the greatest and the source of all shaktis. She is the whole while all other shaktis are Her parts. Sri Nârad tells Srimati Râdhârâni in the Pâtâl-khanda of Sri Padma-Purân –

"O Devi, You are the source of all that is specially pure and good. You are the source of the *hlâdini*, *sandhini* and *samvit* potencies and You are the Su*preme* Power and Su*preme* Knowledge. You give the highest bliss to Sri *Bhagavân* and even Brahmâ and Rudra (Shiva) cannot understand You. Your opulence is remarkable in every aspect. The best of yogis cannot reach You with their meditation. I feel all the divine *shaktis* are Your parts as You control various *shaktis* such as *ichchâ-shakti* (will power), *gyân-shakti* (the power of knowledge) and *kriyâ-shakti* (the power of action). Swayam *Bhagavân* Sri Krishna, Who is the Su*preme* Personality, has countless majesty and they are also Your parts."

Srimati Râdhârâni is the embodiment of Sri Krishna's *swarup shakti*. She has each and every excellent quality and is the presiding Deity for all opulence[1]. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written in Priti-sandarbha (120th chapter) –

"Sri *Bhagavân*'s *swarup shakti* has countless wonderful properties, for example - excellent talents, wealth etc. This *swarup shakti* exists in two forms –

1. it is **unmanifest** and exists in Sri *Bhagavân* only as a 'power'.
2. it is **manifest** and expressed in the forms of Laxmis. The *swarup shakti* that is manifest and appears in the **personal form** is the source of all excellences and opulence. Srimati Râdhârâni is the root of all the Kamalâs[2].

"Srimati Râdhârâni is Sri *Bhagavân*'s primeval potency; She is eternal, without any material quality and other shaktis such as Laxmi and Durgâ are Her parts." – (Gopâl-Tâpani-Shruti)

In fact, Sri Krishna is the topmost *Tattva* and at the same time He is the Cause of all causes. Srimati Râdhârâni too is the su*preme* Shakti and is the Cause of all causes. Sri Gopâl-Tâpani-Shruti has called Her the 'primeval potency' because She is the Cause of all causes. Sri Nârad-Pancharâtra and Goutamiya-tantra have defined Her as 'the su*preme* Shakti' because She is eternal and the topmost.

*"laxmi Saraswati durgâ sâvitri râdhikâ **parâ**,*
bhaktyâ namanti yat shashwat tam namâmiparât-param."

Meaning - "I constantly pay obeisance to Sri Krishna Who is more divine than the divine, and Whom Laxmi, Saraswati, Durgâ, Sâvitri and the '**parâ**-shakti' or su*preme* Shakti Sri Râdhâ worship with devotion."– (Nârad-Pancharâtra)

It is evident from this verse that although Laxmi, Durgâ etc. are divine shaktis, **only Srimati Râdhârâni is** '**parâ**'. What does 'parâ' mean?

"parânte shreshtha-vâchakâh"

Meaning - "When we use the word 'parâ' at the end, it indicates the superlative (greatest)".

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[1] Each opulenace of Sri *Bhagavân* has a form and Srimati Râdhârâni controls it.
[2] Kamalâ is another name of Laxmi.

From this we easily understand that Srimati Râdhârâni is the su*preme*. Sri Nârad-Pancharâtra has used 'parâ' many times in connection with Srimati Râdhârâni. Example -

"rasikâ rasikânandâ swayam râseseshwari parâ".

Meaning - "Srimati Râdhârâni is the connoisseur of *ras*, She takes delight in those who are devoted to *ras*; She Herself is the controller of the Râs-dance and is the greatest of all."

"devi krishnamayee proktâ râdhikâ para-devatâ,
sarva-laxmimayi sarva-kântih sammohini para."

The author of Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita has explained this verse very beautifully –

"Srimati Râdhârâni is resplendent and su*preme*ly beautiful. She is like the altar of Sri Krishna-worship and the playground for His love-sports. She is Krishnamayee, meaning, She is full of Sri Krishna inside and outside. Sri Krishna appears wherever She casts Her gaze. Sri Krishna is love and *ras* personified and His shakti is non-different from Him. She worships Sri Krishna by fulfilling all His desires; hence the Purâns call Her 'Râdhikâ' (the worshipper). Therefore She is all-revered and is the su*preme* deity. She is the all–protector and is the Mother of all the universes.

She is the source of all the Laxmis. The Laxmis are the six majesty of Sri Krishna[1]. Srimati Râdhârâni is their source – the greatest of all shaktis. All beauty and splendour reside in Her. She dispenses beauty to all the Laxmis. Here 'splendour' can also mean all the desires of Sri Krishna – this indicates that all His desires reside in Srimati Râdhârâni. Râdhikâ fulfils His wishes. This is the meaning of 'Sri Râdhâ is all-resplendent'. Sri Krishna mesmerizes everybody and Srimati Râdhârâni holds Sri Krishna spellbound. Therefore we conclude that She is the Su*preme* Owner[2]."– (C.C.)

When the great sage Parâshar[3] mentioned 'parâ-shakti' (the Great Power), he said –
"The Great Power is always beyond description; it is extremely far from our mental speculation and it is a subject for only self-realized *param-hamsas* - I pray to That su*preme* Ishwari[4]."

Although some refer that su*preme* shakti as Laxmi and some call Her as 'Durgâ', actually she is Sri Râdhâ and resides as the absolute power in Vrindâban. Sri Râdhâ is the pinnacle of su*preme* shakti.

"Srimati Râdhârâni is the Su*preme* Power while Sri Krishna is the Su*preme* Personality. The scriptures prove that the two are non-different. Just as musk and its fragrance are inseparable, and so are fire and its burning property, similarly Râdhâ and Krishna are one. They assume two forms simply to relish *ras*." – (C.C.)

Just as the moon is inseparable from its moonlight and the milk is non-different from its whiteness, Râdhâ and Krishna are one. Although They are inseparable, Srimati Râdhârâni is always present besides Sri Krishna in the playground of Leelâ as the 'crest-jewel of all His beloveds'. In love She is Krishnamayee[5], in *ras* She is Gourângi (brilliant), in opulence She is all-Laxmimayee[6], in sweetness She is the foremost Gopikâ. Srila Shukamuni has realized Her immense importance over all other Gopikâs while describing the Râs-leelâ in Srimad-Bhâgavatam.

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[1] When Sri *Bhagavân*'s majesty takes on a form we call her 'Laxmi'.
[2] Because She owns even Sri Krishna.

[3] Mahamuni Parâshar, Husband of Satyavati and the father of Vyâsdev. Maitreya was Mahamuni Parâshar's disciple, so Vyâs and Maitreya were very close friends. He was present also during the time of Bhishma's death. He was the spiritual master of Maharaj Janak and a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He is the author of many Vedic scriptures and sociological directions.

[4] Controller (fem.)
[5] She can think of nothing other than Sri Krishna and is always engaged in serving Him. Sri Krishna is present outside He and withing Her. She is absolutely engrossed in Him.
[6] The aggregate of all the Laxmis

He has placed Her on the highest pedestal amidst hundreds of crores of Gopis during the Râs-leelâ.

anayârâdhito nunam Bhagavân harireeshwarah,
yanno vihâya govindah prito yâmanayadrahah.
- (S.B.10.30.24.)

Explanation – When Sri Krishna disappeared with Srimati Râdhârâni from amidst the Râs-dance, the Brajadevis went mad with *viraha*. They started searching for Him. While searching, they first saw His footprints and when they started following those steps, they noticed Srimati Râdhârâni's footprints on the left side of His footprints. Then they realized that Srimati Râdhârâni is the most blessed of them all. A gopi said – "Dear sakhis, look, these are Râdhâ's footsteps. Sri *Bhagavân* destroys all miseries and fulfils the devotee's heartfelt desire; and Sri Râdhâ has subjugated Him by Her adoration. As a result Sri Govinda has forsaken us in this dead night in the forest and has taken Her in a secluded place unknown to us. Her good fortune is incomparable."

In Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita (8th chapter, Madhya Leelâ), Râmânanda Roy established Sri Râdhâ's *prem* as the crest-jewel of all achievable goals. He quoted this verse from Srimad-Bhâgavatam to prove that Sri Râdhâ is more important than all other Gopikâs. Then Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu objected to it saying –

"The Lord said – tell me more. I am enjoying your talk very much. It seems as if a wonderful river of *amritam* is flowing from your lips. However I do not approve of Krishna taking Râdhâ away stealthily to a secluded place. It appears He is afraid of the other Gopis. This does not show deep love at all. Had Krishna rejected the Gopis openly for Radha's sake, then I would have accepted that He has deep *anurâg* for Her."–(C.C.)

Sri Krishna is entirely subordinate to love. His subjugation is proportional to the type and amount of love. When He stole Srimati Râdhârâni away from the Gopis, then we feel as if He was afraid to upset them. This means He does not love Srimati Râdhârâni openly. Had He taken Her right in front of the Gopis, then we would have appreciated His love for Her. This is why Lord Goursundar is objecting to Sri Govinda's behaviour.
Sri Râdhâ expressed *mân* during the Great Râs while the Gopis became proud of their good fortune. Sri Krishna wanted to alleviate Her *mân* and simultaneously crush the pride of the other Gopis. Therefore He disappeared. Had He taken Sri Râdhâ away infront of the Gopis, Her *mân* would have been assuaged. However, the other Gopis who were floating in the ocean of *bhâv* would have felt jealous. The Râs-dance is a sport of immense *ras*; it has to be free from negative waves. All the participants should immerse in a vast ocean of absolutely pure *prem-bhâv*. This is the only reason why Sri Krishna disappeared with Srimati Râdhârâni without anyone's knowledge and not because He feared the Gopis. It is evident from Sri Jaydev's description of the vernal Râs, where we see that He has openly abandoned the Gopis in Srimati Râdhârâni's favour. Râmânanda Roy is an expert connoisseur of *ras*. He has logically overruled Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu's objection by citing evidence from Poet Jaydev's Râs. He said –

"Then please hear the glory of love. Sri Râdhâ's love is unparalleled in three worlds. Sri Krishna deserted the Râs-dance of the Gopis and wandered in the forest of Vrindâban lamenting for Râdhâ.

Sri Geet-Govindam says (3.1.2) –

kamsarirapi samsâra-vâsanâ-baddha-shrinkhalâm,
râdhâ-mâdhâya hridaye tatyâja Braja-sundari.
itastatastâm-anusritya râdhikâm-ananga-bân-brana-khinâ-mânansah,
kritânu-tâpah sa kalinda-nandini tatânta-kunje vishasâda mâdhavah.

When we analyse these two verses we stumble across an enormous mine of *Amritam*. Sri Krishna was indulging the Râs-dalliance with hundreds of crores of Gopis, while He remained with Râdhâ in one form. When Râdhâ saw that He was expressing equal love for everyone, She felt He was treating Her like an ordinary Gopi, and Her love, which is naturally crooked, became all the more

so. She was angry and deserted the Râs-floor in a huff. When Sri Hari did not see Her, He was agitated. The Râs-leelâ is Sri Krishna's biggest dream-come-true and Râdhikâ is the main 'link' in Râs-leelâ[1]. He did not enjoy the Râs-dance in Her absence. So He left the group and went in search of Râdhâ. He wandered here and there, but could not see Her. Struck by the arrow of passionate love, He sat and lamented. Hundreds of crores of Gopis could not satisfy Him – from this we can easily guess Sri Râdhikâ's excellences." – (C.C.)

Srimati Râdhârâni's excellences

Forget the living being, even Sri *Bhagavân* cannot count Srimati Râdhârâni's excellent qualities. All Her good traits arise from *Mahâbhâv* and hence they entirely subjugate Sri *Bhagavân*. If a particular quality does not spring out of love, howmuchever good it may be, Sri Krishna could not care less. *Bhagavân* Sri Krishna is the absolute and intense form of *sat, chit* and *ânanda.* However Sri Râdhâ is more talented than He is. As a result Sri Krishna is so happy with Her. Srila Krishnadâs Kavirâj Goswâmi has written –

The effect of Sri Râdhâ's excellences on Sri Krishna

"Sri Krishna thinks in His mind - the wise call me absolute bliss, and absolute *ras*. All universes get happiness from me. Is there anyone who can make me joyful? Only someone who is hundreds of times more qualified than me can please me. However it is impossible to find one who is more worthy than me. I realize only Râdhâ to be more competent than me. My beauty can defeat countless Love-gods, none can equal or surpass my sweetness and all universes are delighted to behold my handsomeness. Yet my eyes are soothed when they gaze at Sri Râdhâ. The song of my flute attracts the three worlds, yet Sri Râdhâ's speech is so sweet that it captivates my ears. Although the world is aromatic due to my fragrance, the sweet smell of Sri Râdhâ's body steals my heart and soul. Despite the fact that I am the fountainhead of all the *ras* present in this world, the nectar of Sri Râdhâ's lips enthrals me. Albeit, my touch is as cooling as innumerable moons, Râdhikâ's sweet touch soothes even me. Thus I am the cause of all happiness in the world, yet I continue to exist only because of Râdhikâ's beauty and excellences." - (C.C.)

Sri Râdhâ has innumerable qualities just like Sri Krishna; nevertheless Srimat Rupa Goswâmipâd has cited twenty-five special qualities that singularly mesmerize Sri Krishna.

"Sri Râdhikâ is –

(1) Sweet – this means, in every situation Her expressions, movements and features are pleasurable.
(2) eternally adolescent
(3) Her side-long glances are highly restless
(4) bright smile
(5) She has beautiful symbols of fortune such as barley, discus etc. on Her palms and soles.
(6) She maddens Mâdhav with Her sweet aroma.
(7) She is the topmost expert in singing
(8) Her speech is highly attractive.
(9) well versed in the art of witty speech
(10) humble
(11) compassionate
(12) expert in various arts
(13) extremely clever
(14) bashful
(15) extremely well mannered
(16) patient

[1] The Râs-participants form a chain and dance in a circle; hence Srimati Râdhârâni is called the main 'link' in this chain.

(17) serious
(18) charming expressions of love-making
(19) She is immensely thirsty for Sri Krishna since She is at the height of *Mahâbhâv*
(20) all the residents of Gokul love Her
(21) all universe is resounding with Her fame
(22) She is a pet of the elders
(23) She is completely subjugated by the love of Her sakhis
(24) the chief beloved of Sri Krishna
(25) Sri Krishna is always in Her control

Sri Râdhâ is a treasurehouse of love. What to speak of ordinary beings, even the consorts of other divinities wish they had Srimati Râdhârâni's qualities.

"Srimati Râdhârâni is the personification of Sri Krishna's priceless and especially pure love. She is full of exquisite qualities. Even Satyabhâmâ desires to have good fortune like Her and the fair maidens of Braja learn the art of love-sports from Her. The exalted *devi*s such as Laxmi and Parvati wish they were beautiful like Srimati Râdhârâni. Arundhati who is famous for her chastity craves to be chaste like Her. When Krishna Himself cannot conceive all Her excellences, how can this tiny worthless creature count them?" - (C.C.)

Srimati Râdhârâni is the aggregate of all Laxmis and She is the proprietress of infinite majesty. Yet these opulences are immersed in the fathomless ocean of sweetness, hence Srimati Râdhârâni does not express a single drop of majesty – She is so very sweet! Therefore the *Mahâjan*s have only described Her sweetness. In fact sweetness is to be relished, we should feel it in the heart – it is beyond *bhâv*, language and metre. We cannot realize Srimati Râdhârâni's sweetness without performing the *sâdhanâ* of *prem*. Although the wise say we should meditate on the immaculate lotus-like radiance of Sri Râdhâ, 'immaculate lotus-like radiance' cannot give any clue to Her beauty. The lotus and the moon are material objects. They are just transformations of water and light, while Sri Râdhâ is made of *Mahabhâv*.

"Srimati Râdhârâni is *prem* personified and She is absorbed in *prem* – this is the reason why She is crowned as 'the greatest of Sri Krishna's beloveds'." – (C.C.)

Dear devotees, please relish how the *Mahâjan*s have described That embodiment of *prem* –
"Srimati Râdhârâni is *Mahâbhâv* and dazzles like a wish-fulfilling gem. Loving *sakhi*s such as Lalitâ are Her expansions. She displays Sri Krishna's love for Her like a perfumed anointment on Her body. This makes Her all the more fragrant and brilliant.

Her first bath is with the nectarine shower of compassion; the next bath comprises of nectarine youth; the last bath is with nectarine *lâvanya*. She drapes Herself in a blue silk skirt (since Sri Krishna is blue) and wears a red *dupattâ*[1] which is made of deep love (*anurâg*) for Sri Krishna. The bodice that covers Her bosom is made of *pranay* and *mân.*

Then the sakhis anoint Her with three pastes - saffron (made of beauty), chandan (made of love) and the camphor (made of sweet smile and radiance). She has beautiful designs on Her body made with Sri Krishna's brilliant (erotic) *ras* which is like intoxicating musk. Her silken garment consists of hidden *mân, vâmya,* expressions of *dhammila* and the qualities such as *dhira-adhirâ*.

Her lips are sparkling with the rosyness of the *tâmbul* (made of *râg*), while Her eyes are dark with the kohl of crooked *prem*. Srimati Râdhârâni is decorated with all these *bhâvs* and Her jewellery consists of twenty types of *bhâvs* starting with *kila-kinchit.* The flower garlands She dons on all parts of Her body are none other than Her excellent qualities. The dot that dazzles on Her fair forehead is made of good fortune and Her heart overflows with the liquid gem called '*prem-vaichitti*[2]' (in stead of blood*).*

[1] a cloth that covers the upper part of the body
[2] *Prem*-vaichitti is a type of *bhâv*. Please see glossary.

She rests Her hand on the shoulder of an adolescent sakhi while young maidens who are absorbed in Sri Krishnaleelâ surround Her.

She is seated on the high pedestal of Her perfumed self and is forever absorbed in Her loving pastimes with Sri Krishna. Her ear-rings consist of Sri Krishna's Holy Names and excellences[1] and all She can utter are Sri Krishna's Holy Names and excellences. She makes Sri Krishna drink (with His ears) the nectarine *ras* of His magnificent qualities and relentlessly fulfils His every desire."

- (C.C.)

My dear emotional readers! This is the factual description of the Embodiment of eternal love! We have to feel *Mahâbhâv* with *bhâv* – there is no other way. *Mahâbhâv* is the greatest cause of Sri Krishna's happiness. This is why our Goswâmis have described Sri Râdhâ as 'the One Who pleases Sri Krishna' and then they have cited Her sweet qualities. We see in the **'Vishâkhâ-ânandad Stotra'** (An ode that gives joy to Vishâkhâ sakhi) composed by **Srila Raghunâth das Goswâmi** –

"Sri Râdhâ is the sunray that makes Sri Govinda's lotus-like love bloom[2]. She is the moonbeam that enables Sri Krishna's *kumud*-like heart blossom[3]. She is the great Mânas Sarovar in which Sri Krishna's swan-like mind always swims happily and She is the shower of the fresh rain clouds that breathe new life into the *châtak*-like Shyâmsundar[4]. While Sri Krishna is like the Tamâl tree that blows serene breeze, She is like the golden creeper embracing Him. She is the static lightning that adorns the fresh cloud-like Govinda. In the summer She is like the extremely cool combination of camphor, *chandan* and moonlight smeared all over Govinda. In winter Sri Râdhâ is the attractive golden yellow woollen dress for Shyâm. In the spring She is the vernal beauty while Sri Krishna is like a tree. She makes Him exuberant just like the spring season makes a tree burst into greenery. In monsoon He is Shyâm (dark blue) clouds while She is the *Manju-mallâr râg*[5] that enthuses Him with erotic *ras*. In the Sharad season, She is the Râs-beauty Who openly subjugates Sri Krishna–the-Râs-*rasik* with the help of Her sakhis, and love-sports with Him. The Autumn finds Her as Victory personified as She verily defeats Brajarâj-nandan Sri Krishna Who is in the look out for a duel in the battle of love."

To sum up, Sri Râdhâ is all-in-all of Sri Krishna's divine pastimes. Shyâmsundar is like the dark *tamâl* tree and Sri Râdhâ is like the golden creeper nestling close to His loving bosom, held tightly by His passionate embrace. The sakhi-manjaris are like the newly sprouting leaves on this creeper-like Sri Râdhâ and they are all swinging together in sweet loving *ras*.

> If we, as the sâdhaks of *ras* are not able to see this scene, then the major part of our devotional practice in the mood of Vraja has gone waste.

Worshiping in Braja-*ras* is in vain if we do not surrender to Sri Râdhâ

We have only one aim when we worship Braja-*ras* – and that is to relish Sri Krishna's sweetness, which is like a colossal upsurging ocean. We are tiny living beings. Even if we reach the stage of *prem*, howmuch can we relish with our miniscule love? Hardly a drop. If some tremendously powerful person can relish the entire sweetness of the almighty Sri Krishna with Her all-powerful *prem*, and mercifully She lets us also enjoy the entire delicious sweetness that She has relished, then it will be very nice for us. We will indeed feel blessed and our worship of Braja-*ras* will be completely successful in all respects. However, to gain this bounty we shall have to

[1] Since She hears these constantly
[2] The lotus blooms in sunlight

[3] The kumud blossoms in moonlight
[4] The châtak is fabled to drink only rain water directly from the clouds.
[5] A râg is a particular combination of notes; Manju-mallâr is a type of râg that forces the clouds to shower rain.

surrender unto Her lotus-feet. But first let us find out who is this person? Sri Krishna says in Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita –

"My sweetness is wonderful, infinite and absolute. Nobody in the three worlds can conceive it. Râdhikâ alone completely relishes this nectarine sweetness due to Her *prem*." – (C.C.)

All the *sâdhak*s who take the shelter of Srimati Râdhârâni in the mood of *sakhi-manjaris* – She enables them to relish the entire Sri Krishna-*mâdhuri*, since She is a fathomless ocean of compassion. Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita throws light on this –

"Srimati Râdhârâni is the wish-fulfilling creeper of Sri Krishna-*prem*, while the sakhis are its leaves and flowers. If we water the creeper with Sri Krishna's nectarine talks, then the leaves and blossoms feel more joyous than the creeper itself." – (C.C.)

Srimati Râdhârâni is the wish-fulfilling creeper of Sri Krishna-*prem*[1]. When a creeper absorbs water, it transmits the nourishment to all its branches, leaves and inflorescence; similarly Sri Râdhâ is absorbed in the nectarine divine pastimes of Sri Krishna and She gives the entire relish to Her sakhi-manjaris. Therefore the *Mahâ*jans say that we can hardly appreciate Sri Krishna's sweetness without surrendering unto Srimati Râdhârâni.

"râdhâ-dâsyam-apâsya yah prayatate govinda-sangâshayâ
so'yam purna-sudhâ-rucheh parichayam râkâm vinâ kânkshati.
kincha shyâma-rati-pravâha-lahari-beejan na ye tâm vidu-
ste prâpyâpi marmita-ambudhim-aho bindum param prâpnuyuh."

Meaning - "Whoever rejects Sri Râdhâ's service and tries to gain Sri Krishna's association, wishes to enjoy a full moon without it being a full moon night. Those who do not know Sri Râdhâ – alas! – in spite of getting an enormous ocean of *amritam* they are able to savor hardly a drop!"

Srimati Râdhârâni is the original blissful potency. She is the fountainhead of Sri Krishna-*prem*. We can relish maximum Sri Krishna-mâdhuri in Her shelter. The devotees who are not so blessed as to worship and serve Sri Krishna under Srimati Râdhârâni's subservience, they are indeed unfortunate – if they serve Sri Krishna alone and even though they may get some relish, it is very little. Therefore Sripâd Raghunâth dâs Goswâmicharan had resolved to completely reject their association. He has said –

> "The sages such as Sri Nârad and the Nigam scriptures forever glorify Her and She is Sri Krishna's Chief Beloved. Whosoever disregards Her and serves Govinda alone – he is a cheat and arrogant – I do not wish to be in his defiling presence even for a moment – this is my pledge."
>
> The scriptures say – *"binâ râdhâ-prasâdena krishna-prâptir-na jâyate"*
>
> Meaning - "It is impossible to attain Sri Krishna without Srimati Râdhârâni's mercy."
>
> Lord Shiva has told Devi Durgâ in **Sammohan-Tantra** –
> "Who rejects Sri Râdhâ and worships Shyâmsundar, takes His Holy Name or meditates on Him, will verily fall down."
>
> This is the result of discriminating between Sri Krishna and Sri Râdhâ. She is His eternal consort. Rik Parishishta says –
>
> *"radhayâ mâdhavo devo mâdhavenaiva râdhikâ janeshwâvirbhrâjante"*
>
> Meaning - "Radha with Mâdhav and Mâdhav with Râdhâ resides eternally in this world."

[1] She grants our desire for Sri Krishna-*prem*

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has uttered in pain –

> If somebody is a king, but does not serve Sri Hari, he is a spear in my heart; one who spends money, yet does not offer to Sri Hari is a spear in my heart; who is a poet, yet does not extol the beauty, excellence and pastimes of the Lord is a spear in my heart; who has taken the shelter of guru, but not the shelter of Sri Hari, is a spear in my heart; who is talented, yet does not surrender to Sri Hari, is a spear in my heart; whose heart is pure, yet does not serve Sri Krishna, is a spear in my heart, and who worships Sri Krishna, but does not serve under the subservience of Brajaramâ[1] Sri Râdhâ is a spear in my heart – these seven spears are smiting my heart and are excruciatingly agonizing."

Srila Narottam dâs Thâkur *Mahâ*shai has regretted the misfortune of those who are averse to serving Sri Râdhâ –

"All glory to the Holy Name of Sri Râdhâ, Who resides in Vrindâban and Who is the treasurehouse of Sri Krishna's blissful love-sports. The hymns that extol Her excellences are so sweet – yet my ears are disinclined to hear them – alas! I am so unfortunate!

Whoever always associates with Her devotees and absorbs in the loving discussions about Her *ras*-ful divine pastimes gains the association of Ghanashyâm Sri Krishna. Whoever is indisposed to such conversation will never accomplish the highest goal of human life – I loathe hearing his name even." – (P.B.C.)

It is possible for us to know the very deep confidential mellows of the divine pastimes of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhav only when we associate with the devotees who are surrendered unto the lotus feet of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhav. Srila Raghunâth dâs Goswâmi has written in his **Swa-sankalpa-prakâsh Stotra** (= A hymn to declare my resolution) –

"Whoever has not served the holy, fragrant and compassionate dust of the lotus feet of Srimati Râdhârâni, who has not taken the shelter of Sri Vrindâban that is decorated with Her beautiful footprints, who has not associated with the *rasik* devotees whose hearts are extremely thirsty for the confidential *sevâ* of Srimati Râdhârâni - he can never ever immerse in Shyâmsundar Who is the 'ocean of *ras*' personified."

Sri Râdhâ is Vrindâban-mâdhuri personified

rukmini dwârâvatyantu râdhâ vrindâvane vane

Meaning - "Queen Rukmini is worshiped in Dwârakâ, however Sri Râdhâ is the Controller of Vrindâban."

The su*preme* Truth has two aspects – shaktimân (He Who is potent) and shakti (His potency). Sri Krishna is Shaktimân while Sri Râdhâ is Shakti. Sri Krishna the Su*preme* Being, is intense bliss. His characteristic is joy. Similarly 'shakti' is a descriptive term and it describes 'Shaktimân'. When Shakti and Shaktimân sport with one another – they are expressing majesty - we call it 'Leelâ'.

Shakti is of three types –

[1] The Lady of Vrajadhâm

- Swarup-shakti
- Jiva-shakti
- Mâyâ-shakti

Likewise Leelâ too is of three types –

- **Nitya-leelâ** (eternal divine pastimes) – When Sri *Bhagavân* sports with His swarup-shakti we call it Nitya-leelâ. These pastimes are countless, infinitely variegated, always exultant and su*preme*ly *ras*-ful.

- **Samsâr-leelâ** (pastimes in the material world) – Sri *Bhagavân* performs these leelâs with the living entity.

- **Srishti-leelâ** (the pastime of creation) – He performs these pastimes with Mâyâ-shakti.

We can further classify the Nitya-leelâs into two –

1. **Unmanifest (*aprakat leelâ)*** – Sri *Bhagavân*'s leelâs are flowing continuously since time infinite in the transcendental world (such as Golok Dhâm). It is an eternal, conscious and blissful abode. It is the topmost and beyond material conception. This is the 'unmanifest leelâ'. These pastimes are the source of all other leelâs. When Leelâmay[1] Sri *Bhagavân* wishes to reveal His unmanifest leelâ to everybody, He performs these divine pastimes in the material world – we call them 'Manifest or *prakat leelâ*'.

2. **Manifest (*prakat leelâ)*** – These pastimes are manifest in the material world. Sometimes they are more wonderful and contain more *ras* than the unmanifest leelas (what He performs in the transcendental abode).

In both manifest and unmanifest leelâs, Sri *Bhagavân* mainly sports with His swarup shakti. Although swarup shakti comprises of three types of shaktis - *sandhini, samvit* and *hlâdini*, the *leelâs* that He performs with Hlâdini shakti are the most wonderful.

What is Hlâdini shakti?

"yayâ hlâdayate hlâdayati cha sâ hlâdini"

Meaning - "Although the Su*preme* Being is bliss personified, He relishes complete blissful *ras* and also gives its taste to His devotees; He does this by using a certain Shakti and this is called Hlâdini Shakti."

"Hlâdini Shakti enables Sri Krishna to relish bliss and He makes His devotees enjoy the same by using Hlâdini Shakti." – (C.C.)

The Su*preme* Being is intense bliss and Hlâdini exists as potency in Him[2], while She is also present eternally in *Bhakti*-tattva. (Since *Bhakti* results in joy and Hlâdini means joy). However She also has a particular form to serve That Su*preme* Being Who is Shringâr-rasa-râj (the King of Erotic *ras*). Therefore She exists outside the Swarup shakti as well. Now She becomes famous as 'Bhagavad-priyâ' or 'Beloved of Sri *Bhagavân*'. There are many such beloveds emanating from Her. They reside in Golok, Vaikuntha etc. we can classify these beloveds into three types –

1. Parama-sweeyâ – eg. The Laxmis of Vaikunthas
2. Swakiyâ – eg. Sitâ in Ayodhyâ, Rukmini, Satyabhâmâ and the other queens in Dwârakâ
3. Parakiyâ – eg. The Gopikâs in Vrindâban

[1] One Who is full of leelâs
[2] She is a part of His swarup shakti or internal potency.

We find that sweet *ras* is the most exultant in *parakiyâ bhâv*. Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says – "*Ras* is the maximum in *parakiyâ bhâv* and this mood does not exist anywhere other than in Brajadhâm." – (C.C.)

"The love affair in which the lover and the beloved face numerous obstacles in meeting one another, their love is hidden, and they find it extremely difficult to get each other - that love is the most erotic and the topmost". – (U.N.)

As a result the beloveds in *Parakiyâ bhâv* (the Gopis) are renowned as '*samarthâ nâyikâ'* or 'self-independent beloveds'. Amongst these self-indepent and most capable Braja-beauties[1], Srimati Râdhârâni is the greatest because She is the embodiment of the famous '*Mâdanâkhya Mahâbhâv*'. Just as Sri Krishna is the personification of total nectarine *ras*, Srimati Râdhârâni is absolute *Mahâbhâv*. *Bhâv* is expressing itself through *ras* and *ras* is relished in *bhâv* – in this manner Sri Krishna and Srimati Râdhârâni are uniting with one another and there is unparalleled deluge in the enormous relish of sweet *ras*. Hundreds of crores of Gopis are present only to assist in His sweet meeting with Srimati Râdhârâni. They exist simply to bring about variety in Their love-union.
"Sri Krishna relishes the *ras* of love-sports because of Srimati Râdhârâni; all the other Gopis are the ingredients of *ras*." (C.C.)

This indicates the Râs-dance. All sweetness reaches the zenith during the Râs-leelâ. Sri Râdhâ alone is Râseshwari.

"Govinda does not enjoy the Râs-leelâ without Her." – (C.C.)

The enormous deluge of erotic *ras* that comprises of immensely wonderful songs and dances delights Sri Krishna, Who is the Embodiment of intense *ras* and absolute bliss – this is the remarkable function of Leelâ-shakti. We realize it only when we enter the leelâ – **such realization is prohibited for the outsiders**.

The words of the Shrutis are meaningful only when we understand them in the context of leelâs and the Râs-leelâ is the best incident that proves them true. Although Sri Govinda is Absolute and intense bliss, the sweetness of the Râs-leelâ drives Him crazy. In spite of being *âtmârâm, âptakâm* and '*raso vai sah'*, His heart becomes full of countless desires to relish Râs-leelâ! If we analyze the verse "*remetayâ châtmaratah*" of Srimad-Bhâgavatam we can clearly realize what arouses the massive thunderstorm of countless desires in Sri *Bhagavân*, Who is otherwise 'âptakâm' and His heart is calm (without a single wave) like the Pacific Ocean. That arouser is none other than the sweet love of Srimati Râdhârâni Who is *Mahâbhâv*.[2]

The sages experience Sri Sri Râsleelâ as the great divine sport of *ras* - that expresses the extremely ecstatic union and immensely agitated separation of the Lover and the Beloved, the Su*preme* Being and the Transcendental Nature, the Almighty and the Absolute Power Personified, Su*preme* God and Su*preme* Goddess.

This *ras* is so relishing that Sripâd Shukadev Muni who is completely liberated, has himself drowned in it and has immersed Parikshit *Mahâ*râj as well. This *ras* has maddened Jayadev, Bilwamangal, Vidyâpati and Chandidâs who have themselves floated in it and has set all world afloat. What to speak of others, even Sri *Bhagavân* has accepted defeat in this sweet *ras* at the hands of the Râs-nâyikâs and has declared that He is in debt –
"I can remain manifest in the world for as long as Brahmâ lives and continue to reciprocate your love, yet I shall not be able to repay your debt. The manner in which you have broken all invincible shackles to serve me is incomparable. May your goodness itself be the reward for this!" – (S.B.10.32.22)

[1] Capable of relishing and expressing maximum *prem*.
[2] Some other gopis have mahâbhâv in them, but Srimati Râdhârâni is mahâbhâv personified, that is, She is made up of mahâbhâv.

Rasa-râj is bowing down on His own at *Mahâbhâv*'s feet. And Mâdan-âkhya *Mahâbhâv* reigns su*preme* in the realm of Mâhâ*bhâv*.

"*Mâdan* is the highest of all divine *bhâv*s. It is greater than su*preme* *bhâv*s such as *modan* and *mohan* even. It is the source of all *bhâv*s and takes the Divine Couple to the height of exultation. Only Srimati Râdhârâni Who is Hlâdini Personified possesses *mâdan bhâv*."

– (U.N.)

As a result the wise glorify Srimati Râdhârâni as the **su*preme*most ideal of love**. Although all the Braja-beauties manifest *Mahâbhâv* to a great extent, Srimati Râdhârâni is its source. Her love too is the maximum. Therefore Sri Krishna is greedy to relish Sri Râdhâ's sweet love. This is the reason that He has accepted Sri Râdhâ's *bhâv* and splendour and has appeared as Sri Gourânga. He has Himself savoured Srimati Râdhârâni's sweet love and has immersed the world in that love. He has declared – **"Sri Râdhâ alone is the embodiment of Braja-mâdhuri"**. The Goudiya Vaishnav preceptors are surrendered unto the lotus feet of Sri Goursundar. They have showered the bounty of Sri Râdhâ's sweet love in many ways and made us fortunate.

Sri Sri Yugal-mâdhuri –

the only object of worship for the Goudiya Vaishnavs

Srila Raghunath dâs Goswâmi takes a vow

Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhav is the sole Object of worship for the devotees sheltered at Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu's lotus feet. And they serve Sri Krishna only under Srimati Râdhârâni's subservience. We have already quoted howmuch the Goudiya Vaishnav preceptors grieve when we adore Sri Krishna alone and not serve Sri Râdhâ. Srimat Raghunâth dâs Goswâmipâd has called the one who worships Sri Krishna sans Sri Râdhâ as a fraud and arrogant; he has vowed to reject them instantly. In the same breath he has also declared his heartfelt reverence for the worshipers of the Divine Couple –

"Srimati Râdhârâni's name is so sweet that as soon as a living being hears it, he is bathed in love. Whoever lovingly worships Sri Krishna in accompaniment with Sri Râdhâ – I pledge to wash his feet, drink that water and carry it on my head forever."

If we analyse these two pledges of Srila Dâs Goswâmi we can easily appreciate how important it is to serve Srimati Râdhârâni along with Sri Krishna. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written at the end of Sri-Krishna-Sandarbha –

"Amongst all the divine manifestations, Sri Krishna is God Himself. Again we see that he expresses Himself in three forms – in Dwârakâ, Mathurâ and Vrindâban. Amongst these, He expresses extraordinary sweetness in His Vrindâban-manifestation; therefore the Vrindâban-manifestation is the topmost. In Vrindâban He expresses various moods in His pastimes as a child with His parents and as a boy with His friends. However when He performs love-sports in the *kishor* form with Sri Sri Râdhârâni, who is the crest-jewel of all Vrajânganâs, He is indeed su*preme*ly wonderful. Therefore the worship of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhav is the su*preme*most."

Srimad-Bhâgavatam (1.1.1) describes Sri Krishna's abslute majesty –

"janmâdyasya yato'nvayâditaratashchâartheshwabhignah swarât
tene brahma hridâ ya âdikavaye muhyanti yat soorayah,
tejovârimridâm yathâ vinimayo yatra trisargo'mrishâ
dhâmnâ swena sada nirastakuhakam satyam param dheemahi."

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse as follows –

"Sri Râdhâ is Sri Krishna's su*prem*ely blissful potency. Although Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna are one soul, They have accepted eternal bodies that are different from each other to relish leelâ-*ras*. Therefore Sri Râdhâ is non-different from Sri Krishna. He is forever in deep love with Her. The divine Couple is the source of the primeval *ras* or erotic *ras*. They are very much expert in performing various sports of the primeval *ras*. Noone can describe Their pastimes without Their mercy. They showed immense compassion to Lord Veda-Vyas when They revealed Srimad-Bhâgavatam and this text is luxuriant because of Their leelâs. However in spite of Srimad-Bhâgavatam being revealed in our heart, we cannot describe Sri Râdhâ without Her mercy, since even great persons such as *Shesh* are overcome with illusion when they try to define Her. But Veda-Vyâs definitely had Srimati Râdhârâni's mercy for he was able to at least describe Their sweet Râs-leelâ."

Sri Sri Râdhâ-Govinda are so immensely amazing, that when fire and water come in their contact, they behave strangely. Fire becomes cold and water feels hot to touch. Their splendour puts brilliant objects in the shadow while non-luminous articles become radiant. The river flows upwards and the rocks melt. Their association breathes life into the non-conscious. They even change each other's characteristics – that is, the Lover behaves like the Beloved and the Beloved acts as the Lover – *na so ramana nâ ham ramani*, *duhun mana manobhava peshala jâni.*

Sri Krishna relishes the *ras* of all the beloveds only through Sri Râdhâ. He has used His shakti Yogmâyâ to create the *parakiyâ bhâv*, then He has got rid of all the obstacles in the path of leelâ, and has sported freely in su*prem*e bliss. Such Sri Sri Râdhâ-Govinda alone are the goal of meditation for the *rasik* devotees. Srila Veda-Vyâs, along with his intimate disciples such as Shukadev has meditated on Sri Sri Râdhâ-Govinda and he has proved that They are the topmost objects of worship. The highest result of our devotional practice is to delight in the *ras* of seva along with the *ras* of sweetness. Nothing can compare with Sri Râdhâ-Govinda's sweetness. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written –

"Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhav's sweetness is resplendent with fair and dark brilliance; Their love-sporting eyes are dancing in the pure feast of love, Their sweetness is enriched with the extreme expertise in the art of lovemaking and it is su*prem*ely charming due to Their nectarine love for each other. I pray that sweetness may attract my innermost heart in all respects."

Explanation – Sri Râdhâ's molten-gold complexion is dazzling-white due to Her proximity with Shyâmsundar's brilliance. He has gained an emerald hue because He is close to Her golden color. The Sweethearts have come very close to each other and hence Sri Krishna's left eye and Sri Râdhâ's right eye have become jubilant. It seems as if Their inexpressibly sweet beauty is dancing in celebration. They are decorated with countless expressions of love-sports arising out of *mâdan-âkhya Mahâbhâv.* Mâdan *bhâv* exists only in Srimati Râdhârâni. This *bhâv* is the fountainhead of all other *bhâv*s; therefore it contains the *bhâv*s of the devotees, His associates and the beloveds. As a result *Rasik*-shekhar Sri Krishna can savor the *ras* of innumerable devotees and the *ras* of infinite leelâs just by enjoying the *mâdan bhâv* of Srimati Râdhârâni.

When the sweetness of Sri Mâdhav and Sri Râdhâ Who is the embodiment of Mâdan-âkhya *Mahâbhâv*, reveals in our heart we realize our topmost goal. This is why Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd is praying for a revelation of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhav's expert love-making arising out of Mâdan.

In addition, this sweetness is rich with the all-captivating fragrance of love for each other. The love-sporting Lover and His Beloved anoint Their bodies with saffron and other perfumed unguents whose fragrance spreads in all directions when They embrace each other – this enchants other sakhis also. The signs of love-making arouse Their passion for each other even more and this pleases the sakhis and drowns them in the *ras* of love for

the Divine Couple. When our heart is absorbed in the pure nectarine sweet *ras* of the Divine Couple's love for each other, it becomes delirious with the aromatic love for Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna. Sripâd Jiva Goswâmicharan is saying – may my *chitta* be attracted by all this sweetness.

We, as sâdhaks, too should pray for the same because this will make us accomplish our topmost goal - that is - the confidential seva in the secluded love-grove and give us the complete relish of *ras*.

Sri Sri Gourânga Mahâprabhu has given us this hitherto unoffered gift of **Manjari-*bhâv*-sâdhanâ.** This is His immense magnanimity.

By performing this Manjari-*bhâv*-sâdhanâ we can relish Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhav's sweetness and at the same time we can reach the highest achievable goal – that is – confidential nikunja-*sevâ*.

This Sri Yugal-mâdhuri alone is the only Object of worship for the Goudiya Vaishnavs. Our preceptors too have given us the same instruction. Srila Narottam dâs Thâkur *Mahâ*shai has sung in Manjari-swarup –

"*râdhâ-krishna prân mor jugala kishor,*
jibone morone gati âr nâhi mor.

kâlindiro kule keli kadambero bon,
ratana bedir upor boshâbo dujon.

shyâm-gouri ange dibo (chuwâ) chandanero gandha,
châmara dhulâbo kobe heri mukha-chandra.

gânthiyâ mâlotiro mâlâ dibo donhâr gole,
adhare tuliyâ dibo karpooro tâmbule.

lalitâ bishâkhâa âdi joto sakhi-brinda,
âgyâya koribo sebâ charanârobindo.

shri-krishna-chaitanya-prabhur dâser anudâs,
sebâ abhilâsh kore narottama dâs."

Meaning –"The Divine Couple - Srimati Râdhârâni and Sri Krishna are my life and soul. I have no refuge in life or death other than They. I shall seat Them on the gem-studded altar in the loving woods of Kadamba trees on the banks of the Kâlindi and anoint Them with fragrant chandan paste. O when will I fan Them with a *châmar*, all the while gazing at Their sweet and radiant moon-like faces? When shall I sew Mâlati garlands and put around Them? When will I offer camphor-scented betel leaves to their sweet lips? When will I serve Their lotus-feet under the command of Lalitâ, Vishâkhâ and all other sakhis?

Thus prays Narottam dâs - the servant of the servant of Sri Krishna-Chaitanya *Mahâ*prabhu, since his heartfelt desire is to serve the Divine Couple in this confidential manner."

– (Srila Thâkur *Mahâ*shai's Prârthanâ)

Sri Bhakti-Tattva-Vigyaan

(A Scientific Study of *bhakti*)

What is *bhakti*?

What is *bhakti*? When *Rishis* such as Sanak Muni asked this question, Gopâl-Tâpani Shruti answered –

"*bhaktirasya bhajanam tadihâm-utra-upâdhi-nairâsyena amusmin manah kalpanam-etad-eava hi naishkarmyam.*"

Meaning - "*Bhakti* means 'to serve Sri *Bhagavân*'. When we are free of all material desires and engage our mind and all the senses in serving Sri *Bhagavân*, we call it '*bhajan*' and this *bhajan* alone is '*naishkarmya*[1]'."

These words of the *Shruti* prove that *bhajan* and *naishkarmya* are synonymous. It expresses the truth that when we begin *bhajan* all our material desires are destroyed and our heart becomes immaculate. We simply get drowned in relishing the *sevâ-ras* of Sri *Bhagavân*.

Tâpani Shruti has defined *bhakti* and how *bhakti* subjugates Sri Krishna. It says – "*vigyâna-ghana ânanda-ghana sachchidânandaika-rase bhakti-yoge tishthati.*"

Meaning - "Sri Krishna is intense special knowledge personified. He is revealed through *Bhakti-yog* that is eternal, conscious and blissful *ras*."

From the above statement we learn three things –

- What is *bhakti* – it is eternal, conscious and blissful *ras*
- What does *bhakti* do – it reveals Sri Krishna, which means that He is under the control of *bhakti*
- Sri *Bhagavân's* original form – intense special knowledge

Sri Nârad-Pancha-Râtra says –

"*surarshe vihitâ shâstre harim-uddishya yâ kriyâ,*
saiva bhaktir-iti prokta taya bhakti parâ bhavet.'

Meaning - "*Bhakti* comprises all the activities we perform to serve Sri Krishna. By performing these activities we gain su*preme bhakti* called *prem*."

Here, 'all the activities we perform to serve Sri Krishna' means the actions that please Him such as, hearing, glorifying etc.

What does '*bhaj*' mean?

'*Bhakti*' originates from the root word '*bhaj*'.

bhaj ityesha vai dhâtuh sevâyâm parikirtitah

Meaning - "The root word '*bhaj*' means '*sevâ*'." – (Garud Purân)

However we should note that, if we perform *bhajan* with any desire other than pleasing Sri *Bhagavân*, we shall not gain eternal love.

"We do not get *prem* in spite of performing devotional practice if we have material desires, or the desire for liberation in our heart." – (C.C.Madhya.19.152)

[1] An action that does not bear any fruit and does not result in rebirth.

Bhakti is the chief characteristic of Sri *Bhagavân*'s internal potencies *Hlâdini* and *Samvit. Hlâdini* has only one function – to please Sri *Bhagavân.* Therefore if we have any desire other than pleasing Sri Krishna, *Bhakti* will never appear in our heart. This is why we should first know the truth about Sri *Bhagavân* and *bhakti.* And then we should embark on the path of *bhajan*. Then our hearing, glorification etc. will bear result. Sri Shândilya Rishi has told in his Bhakti-Sutra -

"sâ parânuraktireeshware"

Meaning - "*Bhakti* means su*preme* love for Sri *Bhagavân*."

Sripâd Swapnâchârya has explained this statement as follows –

"In this verse '*anu*' indicates that *bhakti* is the deep attachment we gain for God after we have gained knowledge about God's true form, His glory and what is *Bhakti*."

Srimat Rupa Goswâmipâd has analyzed the above statements of *Shruti* and *Smriti* and has written a verse in the beginning of his beautiful text Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu. In this verse he has expressed the complete definition of **Bhakti**. And this is strictly in accordance with the *Shrutis* and *Smritis*. This definition holds good whether we are in *vidhi-marga*, *râg-mârga*, *sâdhan-bhakti, sâdhya-bhakti, bhâv* or *prem*. The verse is -

anyâbhilâshitâ-shunyam gyâna-karmâdi-anâvritam,
ânukulyena krishnânusheelanam bhaktiruttamâ.

Meaning - "The topmost *bhakti* is that which is free of all desires other than to please Sri Krishna; it is not shrouded in *gyân*[1] and *karma*[2]. It is beneficial to Sri Krishna."

– (B.R.S.1.1.11)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd and Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd have elucidated this verse very nicely. Let us relish their explanation.

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd and Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd's explanation of the '*anyâbhilâshitâshunya*' verse of B.R.S.

'*Bhakti'* comprises activities that are conducive for serving Sri Krishna. This is the true characteristic or main definition of *Bhakti.* The word '*anusheelan*' in the verse has originated from the root '*sheel*'. Now '*sheel*' means '*sheelan*' (to follow some rule) and it is of two types –

- **Do's** – We should do certain things with our body, mind and tongue. With our body we should serve the Deities, with our mind we should meditate on His divine pastimes and please Him with our thoughts; with the tongue, we can glorify His Holy Name, qualities and pastimes.
- **Don'ts** – We should avoid *sevâ*-offences and offences to the Holy Name.

'*Krishnânusheelan*' indicates all the do's and don'ts that we should follow to serve and please Sri Krishna. This involves everything starting from taking the shelter of Sri Gurudev's lotus-feet and practicing *sthâyi-bhâv*[3] and *vyâbhichâri-bhâv*[4]*.*

In this manner if we please Sri Krishna with our body, mind and speech, we can say we are performing *Bhakti*.

[1] Path of knowledge that leads to liberation
[2] Path of action that results in heavenly enjoyments
[3] Permanent mood – in the case of the Goudiya Vaishnavs, it is the mood of a Manjari.
[4] Passing moods such as joy

We can perform *bhakti* in two ways –

- With impurity
- Without impurity

The 'impurities' in *Bhakti* comprise of

a) Some other desires
b) Adulteration.

When our *bhakti* is free of other desires and adulteration, we call it 'pure *bhakti*'.

'Other desires' and 'adulteration'

'**Other desires'** means longing for material objects, liberation, magical powers, monetary gain, power, position, fame etc.

'Adulteration' indicates the presence of *'gyân'* (knowledge) and *'karma'* (action). Here *'gyân'* refers to worshipping the Impersonal and '*karma*' implies activities such as sacrifices, charity and worshiping for material gains - as mentioned in the *smriti shâstras*[1]. Of course knowledge about *bhakti* and Sri *Bhagavân* are true knowledge and we should definitely acquire it. Also it is necessary to perform activities such as worshiping, glorifying and hearing about Sri Krishna. We should also be generous and helpful, but not for the purpose of gaining money, fame and glory. These are parts of 'Sri Krishna-*anusheelan*' (serving Sri Krishna). If we perform these activities without the desire for material gain and/or liberation then we are said to perform pure *bhakti*. This *bhakti* is also called by many other names such as – *nirgunâ* (free of impurities), *kevalâ* (only), *mukhya* (main), *ananyâ* (exclusive), *akinchanâ* (devoid of desires) and *swarup-siddhâ* (self-independent or true form).

Here Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has used a word – '*ânukulya*' or beneficial. If we serve Sri Krishna in such a manner that it is not beneficial for Him, it is not *bhakti*. Let us understand this better. We may serve Sri Krishna in a non-beneficial manner also. Kamsa, Shishupâl, Jarâsandha too served and pleased Sri Krishna; however their activities were not beneficial for Him, rather they intended to harm Him. Therefore we do not call them '*bhakti*'.

Explanation of *'ânukulya'*

Here if we think that, going by the dictionary, '*ânukulya*' also means 'pleasing' then we are wrong. For example, Sri Krishna was pleased to fight with the *asurs* and He relished the *ras* of battle. Although He liked it, we cannot say the *asurs* were performing *bhakti,* simply because they were not doing it for His good. Contrary to them, Mother Yashodâ left the hungry Sri Krishna and hurried to save the milk from spilling. He did not like it one bit, however we call the mother's activity as *bhakti* because she was striving for His welfare (since the milk was meant for Him). So *ânukulya* means 'devoid of envy towards Sri Krishna'.

What does Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd mean by *'uttamâ* ***bhakti'?***

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has proved what is '*uttamâ*' or 'topmost *bhakti*' with this verse from Nârad-Pancharâtra –

sarvopâdhi vinirmuktam *tat-paratvena nirmalam,*
hrishikesha hrishikesha-
sevanam bhaktir-uchyate

Meaning –"*'Bhakti*' is serving Sri Krishna without any impurity, with organs (hands, mouth etc.) that are purified by their loving service."

[1] The scriptures dealing mainly with rituals

We find that the following terms of this verse are synonymous with Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd's verse.

Nârad-Pancharâtra	**Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd**
'*sarvopâdhi vinirmuktam'* (free of impurities)	*anyâbhilâshitâ-shunyam* (free from other desires)
tat-paratvena	*ânukulyâtmak* (beneficial to Him)
nirmalam	*gyâna-karmâdi-anâvritam* (not shrouded by *gyân* and *karma)*
sevanam	*anusheelanam* (to serve)

"*Prem* arises from pure *bhakti*. Therefore I am expressing the characteristics of pure *bhakti*

- Forsaking other desires, other worship, *gyân* and *karma*
- Perform activities for Sri Krishna with all the organs of the body such that
- They are beneficial to Him.

This is pure *bhakti* and we gain *prem* by practicing it. The Pancharâtra and Srimad-Bhâgavatam expound the same." – (C.C. Madhya.19.147-149)

We have already heard what the Pancharâtra has to say. Now what does Srimad-Bhâgavatam state?

Sri Kapildev told Mother Devahuti – "O mother, I am the su*preme* Personality seated in everyone's heart. As soon as someone hears my excellences, if his heart rushes towards me continuously like the flow of the Gangâ towards the sea, if it does not seek anything else and is without the obstacles called *gyân* and karma, then it is *bhakti* without any impurity. My devotees do not accept anything else other than my *seva*. They do not accept *sâlokya* (living with me in the same abode), *sârshti* (an opulence alike to mine), *sârupya* (beauty like mine), *sâmipya* (staying close to me), *and sâyujya (*merging into me), even though I may offer it to them." – (S.B.3.29.11-13)

Such pure devotion results in *prem*. Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu instructed Srila Rupa Goswâmi about how we can gain *prem* as a result of performing pure devotion. Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita elucidates in a simple manner.

"After roaming in the entire universe some blessed creature, by the mercy of Sri Gurudev and Sri Krishna gets the seed of *Bhakti-latâ*[1]. He (the *sâdhak)* becomes the gardener and sows that seed. He nurtures it by pouring the water of hearing about and glorifying Sri Krishna (His beauty, excellences and pastimes). The seed germinates into a sapling, grows into a creeper, and ultimately pierces the covering of the universe. It crosses the River Virajâ and reaches the transcendental abode. There it goes to Golok Vrindâban and climbs Sri Krishna's feet that are like the wish-fulfilling tree. Once there, it spreads and ultimately it fruits into *prem*.

How pure devotion results in *prem*

Here the gardener waters the creeper daily with the water of hearing, glorifying etc. If he commits *Vaishnav*-offence, which is like a mad elephant, then it uproots the creeper, and its leaves dry up. Therefore the gardener takes care not to commit *aparâdh*. However it is possible that parasitic plants may grow on the creeper.

[1] *Bhakti* is likened to *latâ* or a creeper since it is very tender and fragile. This also indicates that we have to nurture it with care.

What are these 'parasitic plants'?
They are the desires for material pleasure, liberation and countless other wishes. These parasitic plants also contain forbidden activities, crookedness, violence, monetary gain and power. The water nourishes these parasitic plants in stead of the Bhakti-creeper; they grow further and further, while the main creeper stops growing. Therefore first of all, we should cut off these other plants. Then only the main creeper will grow and travel to Vrindâban. It will fruit into *prem* that will ripen so much that it will fall off the creeper on its own and the gardener will eat it and enjoy. He will climb up with the support of this creeper and reach the wish-fulfilling tree (Sri Krishna's lotus feet). There he will serve that wish-fulfilling tree and enjoy the *ras* of the *prem*-fruit happily. This is highest reward and the su*preme* goal of human life. All other goals are worthless as compared to it." – (C.C. Madhya.19.143-146)

What is *bhakti* made up of?

When we analyze *bhakti* from the philosophical point of view, we see that it contains nothing other realization and *ras*. Ordinary people have many doubts regarding *bhakti* because it contains joy. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written in Priti-Sandarbha (65) –
"*Shruti* says – '*Bhakti* takes the devotee to God and reveals Him to the devotee. *Bhakti* subjugates Sri *Bhagavân* and it is the best and the surest way to attain Him.'

Bhakti is so great that it is able to madden Sri *Bhagavân* with its own joy – the same Sri *Bhagavân* who is bliss Himself! So what does *bhakti* comprise? The proponents of *Sânkhya*, who do not believe in the existence of God, say that no joy is greater than when we are established in goodness. Sri Jiva says - *Bhakti* is not like the happiness arising out of goodness because the mode[1] of goodness is material. We read in the scriptures that *bhakti* subjugates Sri *Bhagavân*, and nothing material can possibly control Him. Also He is joyful in Himself and self-satisfied. He does not feel the necessity for any material pleasure. Therefore *bhakti* is not synonymous with the mode of goodness.

When the worshipers of Brahman realize Him, His bliss transmits into them. Therefore they feel certain pleasure. However *bhakti* is not Sri *Bhagavân's* own joy either, since we find that *bhakti* gives more pleasure than Brahman-realization. Sri *Bhagavân* too is happier with *bhakti* than He is with Himself.

Bhakti definitely is not the inner joy arising out of the living being (if it does not arise from Sri *Bhagavân*, how can it arise from us since we are His part?) We are atomic; our happiness too is miniscule. It is impossible to make Sri *Bhagavân* delirious with such small pleasure. How can a goat attract the owner of crores of *kâm-dhenus*[2] ?

Dhruva Maharaj says (quoted in Vishnu-Purân) – "O my Lord, You are the source of everything. The three potencies such as *Hlâdini*, *Sandhini* and *Samvit* reside in You. You are above all material modes of nature. Therefore *sattva*-gun that gives peace, the troublesome *tama*-gun and *raja*-gun – do not exist in You (but in the material world only)."

Now the question arises – how is it possible for *Hlâdini shakti* to give such immense pleasure to Sri *Bhagavân* when all the while it is present in Him? Let us study the following case. There is a man called Devdatta. If we say 'Devdatta does not eat during the day, yet he is fat,' it surely indicates that he eats during the night. Similarly we find that Sri *Bhagavân* is getting immense pleasure from *bhakti* and at the same time it is not possible for *Hlâdini shakti* to make Him so happy, since it already exists within Him. We have previously stated that when we do *Bhakt*i, it gives Him much more joy than Brahman-realization. Therefore we conclude that *Bhakti* is not synonymous with *Hlâdini shakti*, just as Devdatta cannot become fat without food. If he does not eat during the day, he must be eating at night – so if *Hlâdini shakti* is not giving Him so much happiness by herself, then logic follows that she must be giving Him immense pleasure in some other form. What is

[1] There are 3 material modes of nature – goodness, passion and ignorance.
[2] Wish-fulfilling heavenly cow

that form? We conclude – when the devotee assists *Hlâdini shakti*, She gains a special power and gives even Sri *Bhagavân* (Who is Her source) extreme happiness so much so that He is spellbound.

What happens is like this – *Hlâdini* has a property called extreme happiness. It continuously enters the devotees and exists in them as 'love for God'. Therefore when Sri *Bhagavân* feels that love, He too is extremely pleased with His holy devotees. *Bhakti* is an **intense combination** of *Hlâdini* and *samvit shakti*.

It enters the heart of a devotee and gives Sri *Bhagavân* immense pleasure. Therefore it is so powerful that it controls Sri *Bhagavân*. Here **intense combination** means *tat-sâratvancha tannitya-parikarâshrayak tad-ânukulyâ-bhilâsha-visheshah*' - '*Bhakti* is the desire that forever exists in His eternal associates and benefits Sri *Bhagavân*.' This *bhakti* flows like the River Mandâkini[1] from the eternal associates in disciplic succession of devotees (Guru-*paramparâ*) in the material world.

We may ask – *bhakti* is transcendental. It is the intense combination of *Hlâdini* and *samvit*. It is the opposite of material nature. Even Sri *Bhagavân* experiences it and it is su*prem*ely blissful. Then how come this great element appears in this material world and that too in the miniscule living beings? The answer is that – the mercy of the pure devotee carries *bhakti* from the transcendental world and places it inside the living being, unknown to him. Later it attracts his heart and creates a situation so that the seed of the *bhakti*-creeper (the wish-fulfilling creeper) can be sown in the heart. This seed sprouts into a desire to serve Sri *Bhagavân* in favorable manner. A loving mother picks up her baby rolling in the dust, wipes it cleans with her own cloth and suckles it. *Bhakti* devi too is loving. We, who are turned away from God, have dirt inside us. This dirt consists of doubts regarding God, and many material desires. She cleans the dirt and enthusiastically sows the seed of *Bhakti*-creeper that is favorable for Sri *Bhagavân* and for *bhajan*. Then *Bhakti* devi makes us inquisitive about *bhajan*, knowledge of *bhakti*, firm scriptural faith that is good for *bhakti* and disinterest in material objects. When our *chitta* gets cleansed in this manner, the devotee thinks, whether my material attachment diminishes or increases, whether hundreds of obstacles appear in *bhajan*, I can never forsake the path of *bhakti.* The devotee is firmly determined; gradually his offences and *anarthas* disappear and he is blessed with *rati* and ultimately *prem*.

Bhakti is the means

Prem is the most desired wealth and the topmost goal of the living being. And *bhakti* is the means to obtain it. Therefore we call devotional practice as the '*abhidheya*' (means or process). We cannot get Sri *Bhagavân's* mercy by following any path, be it *karma*, *gyân* or *yog* – if we do not possess *bhakti.*

"*Gyân*, *karma* or *yog* cannot subjugate Sri Krishna; He can be controlled only by the *ras* of love and devotion." – (C.C)

Sri Krishna has told Sri Uddhav – "O Uddhav, steadfast devotion for me subjugates me to such an extent that *yog, sânkhya*, *dharma,* study of the Vedas, austerity and even renunciation cannot."

– (S.B.11.14.20)

[1] **Mandâkini** is a tributary of river Alaknandâ. Mandâkini originates from the Charabari glacier near Kedârnath in Uttarâkhand, India. Mandâkini is fed by river Vâsukigangâ at Sonprayâg. Mandâkini joins Alaknandâ at Rudraprayâg. Alaknandâ then proceeds towards Devaprayâg where it joins with Bhâgirathi River to form the Gangâ.

"Devotion for Sri Krishna is the most important means to obtain Him. If we want to attain success in karma, *yog* or *gyân*, we have to resort to *bhakti.* These practices yield fruits that are next to nothing and do not have any power without the assistance of *bhakti."* – (C.C.)

Bhakti is the only means to achieve spiritual goal. In fact *bhakti* is the only way for the living being. *Bhakti* can help all living beings to attain happiness. Therefore the *shâstras* and *Mahâ*jan have called *bhakti* as the su*preme dharma*, su*preme yog* and su*preme* welfare. Srimad-Bhâgavatam says – when Sri Brahmâ patiently analyzed all the Vedas thrice, he understood that the scriptures have only one message – and that is devotion for God. Not only this, *Bhakti* alone is the topmost goal for the living being. Devotional practice is universal. Anybody can follow this path, anywhere and in any situation. The *Chatuhshloki*[1] of Srimad-Bhâgavatam says –

"etâvadeva jigyâsyam Tattva-jigyâsunâtmanah,
anvaya-vyatirekâbhyâm yat syât sarvatra sarvadâ."

Meaning - "O Brahmâ, whoever wishes to know the confidential truth about love for me, will accept the path of devotional practice that contains do's and don'ts; it is universal and eternal. He will enquire about it from his Spiritual Master."

Sri *Bhagavân* is proving that devotional practice is the means to achieve our goal. Although karma*, gyân* and *yog* also have rules, it is not written anywhere that if you do not resort to them you will commit an offence. Rather some parts of the scriptures also criticize them. On the other hand, we find lots of statements that assert the need for *bhakti.* Srimad-Bhâgavatam states –

"Sri Chamas Yogindra told *Mahâ*râj Nimi – O King, The *brahmins* are born from Sri *Bhagavân's* mouth; they are in the mode of goodness. The *Kshatriyas* (warriors) have arisen from His arms; they are in the mode of passion. The *Vaishyas* are born of His thighs; they are in the combined mode of passion and ignorance. The *shudras* are born of His feet; they are in the mode of ignorance. Likewise, the four âshrams viz. the order of householders, celibacy, *vânaprastha* and *sannyâs* have arisen from His thighs, heart, bosom and head respectively. Therefore we see that Sri Hari is the father of all four *varnas* and orders. If a member of the human society does not adore[2] Sri Hari, Who is the parent, he is disregarding Him. They fall down from their state."
– (S.B.11.5.2-3)

Sri Krishna has told in Gita with His holy lips –

"na mâm dushkritino mudhâh prapadyante narâdhamâh,
mâyayâpahrita-gyâna âsuram bhâram-âshritâh."

Meaning - "O Arjun, all those who are sinful, foolish, have lost their intelligence due to *Mâyâ* and are in the evil mode of nature are the lowest of human species and they do not surrender unto me."

Thus we see that those who are without *bhakti* suffer in many ways However we never come across any scripture criticizing the devotional process.

Devotional practice is indeed universal. We find it -

- **In every scripture**

Skanda Purân states –

[1] The Chatuhshloki Bhâgavatam which as the name suggests condenses the essence of the Purân into 4 verses. It was imparted by Sri Bhagavân to Brahmâji who was about to perform creation but has doubts as to the nature of what he is about to create. It occurs in the 9th chapter of the 2nd skandha of Srimad-Bhâgavatam.

[2] 'adore' naturally indicates *sevâ* which in turn means *bhakti.*

âlochya sarva-shâstrâni vichârya cha punah punah,
idamekam sunishpannam dhyeyo nârâyano sada.

Meaning - "After analyzing all scriptures and repeated pondering we conclude that always Sri Nârâyan is the Only Object of meditation."

- **Suitable for everybody**

Sri Brahmâ has told Sri Nârad –

"Fallen beings such as women*, shudras, huns* and *shabars* too can take the shelter of Sri Hari. If they surrender unto Him, Who is the only refuge for devotees and if they follow their nature and activities, then they can know the truth about Him. They too can cross His illusory potency (*mâyâ*). Even if animals associate with devotees and follow their conduct and nature, they can also learn the truth about Sri *Bhagavân* and can transcend the material ocean. Then do we have any doubt that we can learn the truth about Sri *Bhagavân* and cross the material barrier after hearing instructions from the Holy Spiritual Master about *jap*, and we hear, glorify and meditate on Him?"- (S.B.2.7.46)

> *Bhakti* is so universal that anyone, simply anyone – whether he is most sinful, pious, learned or without any knowledge, renounced or with deep attachment, striving for liberation or already liberated, not-yet-successful in *Bhakti*, or he has accomplished success in *Bhakti*, practiced-and-became the Lord's associate or eternal associate – *bhakti* is for everyone, is good for all and spreads happiness all around. There is no restriction or requirement for anyone to follow this path. Therefore undoubtedly, we should all practice *Bhakti.*

It is true that the ones **who have committed heinous crimes** too get su*preme* peace by practicing *bhakti.* Sri *Bhagavân* has Himself assured in Bhagavad-Gita -

"O Arjun, even if one commits most abominable activities, yet he serves me, then consider him a saint; for by the impact of *bhakti,* he will very soon become righteous and attain eternal peace. Dear Kounteya (son of Kunti), in this context you may declare in an assembly of debate that my devotee never perishes." – (B.G.9.30-31)

When someone who indulges in foul actions can achieve welfare by practicing *bhakti,* how much more will someone following the rules of *bhakti,* and having good conduct, attain – can we guess?

Sri *Bhagavân* has told Uddhav –

"O Uddhav, the people who live in impure countries and times – if they serve me who is the soul in all beings - either knowing me to be *sat-chit-ânanda*, or not knowing this – but if they adore me exclusively, then I consider them as the best of my devotees." – (S.B.11.11.33)

This proves that the ones **with knowledge or without knowledge** can practice devotion.

Srimad-Bhâgavatam very clearly mentions that even the ones who are very **deeply attached to material pleasures** are qualified for devotional practice.

"Sri Krishna told Uddhav – Dear Uddhav*, Bhakti* is very powerful. Even though in the beginning of devotional practice my devotee may be highly materialistic, yet with practice (by the impact of *bhakti*) he mostly transcends the temptations of materialism." – (S.B.11.14.18)

Hence it is needless to state that by the effect of *bhakti*, the ones who are detached from materialism will definitely not succumb to its charm again.

The ones who are already liberated and the ones striving for liberations, both have the tendency for *bhakti* – we know this from Srimad-Bhâgavatam –

"*mumukshavo ghora-rupân hitvâ bhuta-pati-natha,*

nârâyana-kalâh shântâ bhajanti hi-anasuyavah.'

Meaning - "Sri Suta Muni said - O Shounak, those **who wish to be liberated** from the bondage of ignorance should reject the worship of terrible forms such as Bhairav etc. and in stead adore the serene forms of Sri Nârâyan or the divine forms emanating from Him ."

Sri Suta Muni has described how the already liberated people serve Sri Hari –

âtmâ-râmashcha munayo nirgranthâ apy-urukrame,

kurvanty-ahaitukim bhaktim-itthambhuto guno harih."

Meaning - "O Shounak, Sri Hari's excellences attract even the *âtmârâm* **sages** who are liberated from the bondage of false-ego and serve Him without any cause." – (S.B.1.7.10)

Whether a devotee has reached the state of *rati* oreven if he has not attained *rati,* it is possible that he still likes to practice *bhakti* –

"Sri Shukadev told *Mahâ*râj Parikshit – O King, some great people who are devoted to Vâsudev, destroy huge collection of sins by practicing pure devotion just as the direct rays of the sun annihilate fog." – (S.B.6.1.15)

This indicates the *ajâta-rati* devotee (**who has not attained *rati***) since this statement does not mention any special expression of bhakti manifested by the devotee.

The following statement proves that one **who has reached the stage of *rati*** too likes devotional practice –

"Sri Havi Yogindra told Nimi *Mahâ*râj – O King, Brahmâ and other *devatâs* strive to obtain the lotus-feet of Sri *Bhagavân*, yet they do not achieve them. However the devotee's mind is transfixed on those extremely rare lotus-feet and does not waver for half a moment even though you may offer him the wealth of the three worlds. He is the best amongst the Vaishnavs." – (S.B.11.2.53)

We find the devotees who have become **the Lord's associates** by performing *bhakti-sâdhanâ* continue to do so –

"Sriman-Nârâyan told the great sage Durvâsâ – O Muni, my devotees who are free of all material desires do not want to accept the four types[1] of liberation although offered on a platter, since they are always engrossed in the joy of serving me. This is the effect of their *Bhakti*. When they do not wish for liberation that brings su*preme* bliss, then it is needless to say that they have no inclination for temporary material objects." – (S.B.9.46.7)

The **eternal devotees** (e.g. Laxmi devi) too practice *bhakti* –

"Sri Brahmâ told the *devatâs* – O *Devas*, The lakes of Vaikuntha contain extremely clear and pure water. It is nectarine in taste. The banks of these lakes are bound with corals. Laxmi

[1] Sâlokya – living in the same abode as that of the Lord
Sârshti – having the same opulence as the Lord
Sâmipya – to live close to Him
Sârupya – to look similar to Him

devi sits on the shore along with her maidservants and worships Sri Vishnu with Tulasi leaves. Then she sees her reflection in the water of the lake and gazes at her pretty face with its curly locks and high nose. She meditates on Sri Nârâyan kissing her face." – (S.B.3.15.22)

- **Every sense organ is happy to perform *bhakti***.

For example – *"mânasopachârena paricharya harim mudâ*

pare'vâm-manasâ gamyan tam sâkshât pratipedire."

Meaning - "Extremely fortunate devotees have got actual *darshan* of Sri Hari by serving Him in meditation, although He is indescribable and inconceivable."

And of course we all know how to serve Him with external senses. In fact, *Bhakti* means to serve Him with all our senses. The blessed Lord has told in Sri Gita –

"patram pushpam phalam toyam yo me bhaktyâ prayachchhati

tad-aham bhaktyupahritam-ashnâmi prayatâtmanah."

Meaning - "O Arjun, who lovingly gives me a leaf, flower, fruit or water – I eat that loving offering of the pure devotee."

We can practice devotion by various activities –

Devarshi Nârad has told Sri Vâsudev - "Dear Vâsudev, if one hears Bhâgavat dharma, reads, meditates, respects or simply second (approve) of Bhâgavat dharma, even though he may be inimical to the entire universe, this action immediately purifies him." – (S.B.11.2.12)

- **We can perform *bhakti* through all activities** –

The Lord told Arjun – "O Arjun, whatever you do, eat, offer in sacrifice, give in charity, perform austerity – offer them all unto me." – (B.G.9.27)

- **Not only this, we also see that some have performed just a shadow of *bhakti* (not pure *bhakti*) and yet they have got the result, such as Ajâmil**.

He was scared of the emissaries of Yam (the Lord of death) and piteously called out to his son Nârâyan. As a result of this, he later went to Vaikuntha. All of us have heard this story from Srimad-Bhâgavatam. We find another incident in The Purâns –

Once upon a time, a mouse lived in a *Mandir*. Everyday it used to carry away the cotton wick dipped in ghee to eat. One day when he was scurrying with the wick dipped in ghee; it accidentally touched a lighted lamp. The mouse tried its level best to get rid of the wick since his mouth was burning. But since it had got entangled in its teeth, he could not set free of the fire. The Lord accepted its movements as if it had performed *ârati.* In the next life it was born as a queen. She conducted a festival of lights for the Lord, pleased him and went to his abode.

In the above narration we see that the mouse has committed an *aparâdh* by stealing the ghee-wick. Also it has performed *ârati* which is not true *bhakti*, but just a shadow of *bhakti* (*bhakti-âbhâs*). Yet, Sri *Bhagavân* did not consider its offense (since the mouse was ignorant), rather He was satisfied with its *bhakti* (offering of lamp) and brought its soul to His abode.

- **Srimad-Bhâgavatam tells us that Sri Bhakti Devi can give all sorts of results in return for *bhakti***.

For example –

"Who has no desire other than serving the Lord, who has all material desires and who longs for liberation – if they are intelligent, all of them will worship the Su*preme* Personality with deep devotion."

The scriptures recommend *bhakti* as the mode of worship in every age –

"*krite yad-dhyâyato vishnum tretâyâm yajato makhaih,*

dwâpare paricharyâyâm kalou tad-hari-kirtanât."

Meaning - "Whatever the people achieved by meditation in *Satya Yug*, offering fire-sacrifice in the *Tretâ Yug*, worshiping Him in *Dwâpar Yug*, they can attain the fruits of all these activities simply by taking the Holy Name in *Kali Yug.'*

- **We can perform devotional practice anywhere and in any situation**, for example –

Prahlâd in his mother's womb, Dhruva as a child, Ambarish and Bharat in youth, Dhritarâshtra in old age and Ajâmil at the time of death performed *bhakti* and achieved the highest welfare. Sri *Bhagavân* tells us about Chitraketu who served Sri Hari in the heaven. In Nrisimha Purân we read of an instance when a devotee attained Sri *Bhagavân* by taking His Holy Name in hell. Thus we observe that *bhakti* is universal and eternal. Therefore we can firmly state that *bhakti* is the only means to achieve the topmost goal of life.

Who is qualified for *Bhakti*?

Each and every man is qualified for *bhakti*. Although *bhakti* is universal and does not depend on the place and time and person, Sri *Bhagavân* has told Uddhav with reference to who is qualified for pure devotion –

yadrichchhayâ mat-kathâdou jâta-shraddhastu yah pumân

Meaning - "When someone gains faith in hearing my *kathâ*[1], know him to be qualified for *bhakti-yog*." – (S.B.11.20.8)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse as – "While stating the qualification for *bhakti-yog*, Sri *Bhagavân* has said that the cause and rules of *bhakti-yog* are very much different for those of *karma-yog* and other spiritual paths. He has noted that scriptural faith alone is the cause of *bhakti.* In this verse '*yadrichchhayâ'* means 'one becomes worthy for the path of *bhakti* when one comes in contact with some extremely self-sufficient (spiritually)[2] devotee and the devotee takes mercy on him. This brings about his welfare and he becomes qualified for practicing *bhakti.'*

There are only two ways to gain faith – association with a devotee and getting his mercy.

Sri Suta Muni told sages such as Shounak – "O pure souls, if we visit holy places we generally tend to serve the pure devotees; if we have respect for *Hari-kathâ* and wish to hear about Sri *Bhagavân*, that *sevâ* arouses in us an interest for Holy discourse." – (S.B.1.2.16.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse as follows – "Suppose someone visits a Holy Place, say Vrindâban, simply because his job warrants him to go there. He sees some devotees who might have come there to serve Vrindâban or they may be residents of that place. They take *darshan* of the great devotees, touch their feet, speak to them and serve them. As a result of their *sevâ*, they start believing in them. Pure devotees are naturally engrossed in discussing about Sri *Bhagavân* amongst themselves. The visitor becomes curious – 'let me hear what they are talking'. When he hears Sri *Hari-kathâ* from their holy lips, he gains interest in it."

[1] Divine discourse describing Sri Bhagavân's beauty, the Holy Name, excelelnces and pastimes.
[2] A devotee who performs bhakti-sâdhana on his own, and does not need external prodding or inspiration to do so.

Thus, association and mercy of pure devotees result in faith, and faith is the only requisite to start with devotional practice.

What is faith?

"*Shraddhâ* (faith) means very firm conviction that if we perform Sri Krishna-*bhakti* we will achieve success in all our endeavors." – (C.C.Madhya.22.37.)

We should believe that the scriptures tell the truth, have firm conviction in them, try to study them carefully and adopt measures to resolve contradictions. If we follow the scriptures in this manner then we shall surely come to the conclusion that life is worthless without devotional practice.

When can we say we have faith?

Suppose we know that if we perform desire-free karmas our heart will become pure, and if we do not perform the same, we shall go to hell. In spite of knowing this, when we have the firm conviction that following these paths are obstacles in my service unto Sri *Bhagavân,* if I perform only Sri Krishna-*bhakti,* I shall succeed in all my endeavors and resolutely forsake all other *dharmas*, we can say we have faith in Sri Krishna and Sri Krishna-bhakti. Such faith leads us to Sri Hari-*bhajan.*

Shraddhâ = shrat + dhâ + am. Shrat = heart; *dhâ = dhâran* (to hold) or establish. Thus, *shraddhâ* means – believing with all our heart – believe the scriptures – believe in the meaning of the scriptures. *Shruti* says –

"When we gain *shraddhâ* in Sri *Bhagavân* then we think about Him and meditate on Him; an unfaithful person can never do this. Therefore O Nârad, first you try to understand what faith is." Sri Nârad said, "I wish to know about *shraddhâ* itself. How do I learn about *shraddhâ*?" – (Chândogya Upanishad)

The reply to this question is – "*shradhâtvanyopâyavarjyam-bhaktyunmukhi-chitta-vritti-visheshah"*

How do we know we are detached from material pleasure?

Meaning - "*Shraddha* is to reject all other means and turn to *bhakti* alone." – (Âmnây- sutra)

Hence when we have faith and turn to *bhakti*, then we gradually become detached from material pleasure. As a result we gain dislike for all topics unrelated to Sri Krishna and we are satisfied with whatever we get. This proves we have faith or *shraddhâ.*

Another proof of *shraddhâ* is – *bhagavat-shranâgati* - complete refuge at the lotus feet of Sri *Bhagavân*. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd says –

"*Sharaddhâ* and *sharanâgati* (to accept His shelter or protection) are synonymous. It is logical, since if we have faith in the scriptures we shall surely believe that those who are not surrendered to Sri *Bhagavân* need be afraid and those who are in His shelter have no need to fear. Therefore if we have *shraddhâ* we shall definitely have *sharanâgati*." – (Bhakti-sandarbha – 173)

Immediately after this Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has mentioned a few characteristic of scriptural faith. Let us learn this in brief. He says that, if we gain scriptural faith - whether we realize our goal or not, we shall continue to serve Sri *Bhagavân* just like a gold-digger[1]. We shall not care for monetary gain, fame and power. Knowingly we will never offend the devotees. It is possible we may not be able to give up material pleasure altogether; however we will not have deep

[1] One who is convinced there is gold in a certain place continues to search for it in spite of failing repeatedly.

attachment for the same. If we have *shraddhâ* we shall never be ill-mannered or commit anything foul.

Sri *Bhagavân* wants that we should be careful and enthusiastic when we embark on *bhakti,* since – "*jatnâgraha binâ bhakti nâ janmây preme"*

Meaning - "Devotional practice does not result in *prem* if we are not careful and enthusiastic."

– (C.C.)

A father may give all his property to an unworthy son, yet he would be happier if he could make his son worthy and then confer the rights of the property to him. This is natural. Sri Hari loves us, therefore He gives us *bhakti* only after we have gained faith in Him, and it is true. However, how much qualified we are, to receive *bhakti,* depends on the extent of *shraddhâ* we have. The faithful can be classified into three categories –

- Best
- Medium
- Junior

The best – He is a good expert in the scriptures and in presenting logic based on the same. He firmly believes that **Sri Krishna is the only Object of worship, Eternal Love is the only goal and *bhakti* is the only means to achieve this goal.** He has absolutely no doubt about this and has very deep *shraddhâ* – he is the most qualified te receive *bhakti*.

"Who is a good expert in the scriptures and has extremely firm conviction, He is the best amongst the faithful and can deliver the whole world." – (C.C.)

The medium – He is not so good at analyzing the scriptures nor is he so experienced in studying or presenting the *shâstras*. In case of a debate, if the opponent is strong he cannot decide what to say; neither can he resolve a difficult poser. However he has extremely strong conviction and is very sure about whom he should worship and what *bhajan* he should perform. None – not even a strong opponent – can shake his faith.

"He does not know the scriptures, however he has very firm faith; he is the medium devotee and is highly blessed." – (C.C.)

Junior – He has little knowledge of the *shâstras* and he has less faith. One may break his faith through arguments presented from the scriptures.

"He is a 'junior devotee' since he has less faith; he too will gradually ascend to the top." – (C.C.)

64 rules of *Bhakti*

Sri Prahlâd *Mahâ*shay has cited 9 rules of *bhakti* in Srimad-Bhâgavatam – hearing, glorification, remembrance, serve the lotus-feet, worshiping, prayer, servitude, friendship and self-surrender. Scriptures such as Sri Hari-Bhakti-Vilâs mentions many more rules of *Bhakti*. To make us happy Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has skimmed through all the scriptures and compiled all of the rules. He made them easy for us so that we find devotional practice a joy and not drudgery. He has penned down 64 rules. Of these, the first twenty form the gateway to the Temple of *Bhakti* – there are10 do's and 10 don'ts.

The 10 do's

1. **Surrendering unto Sri Gurudev's feet** - First of all, we have to take the shelter of the Spiritual Master. Without this we can never start with *bhajan*. If we find someone making little progress in the path of devotion we should know that he had accepted the shelter of Sri Gurudev in his past life

and had made some progress. Hence a faithful person should first take refuge at Sadguru's feet, take initiation in Sri Krishna-*mantra* and take instruction about *bhajan.* Sri Gurudev instructs him about the topmost achievable goal and how to accomplish it. He also teaches the devotee about good conduct, drive away the disciple's ignorance and show him the path to Sri *Bhagavân.* In this manner he showers mercy and blessing on him. On the other hand we see how much one suffers if he is not under the guidance of Sri Gurudev.

"The one who forsakes the feet of Sri Gurudev and tries to control the extremely wavering mind by regulating the sense organs and life-airs, they get painful experience from the very same sense organs and life-airs. They fall into hundreds of troubles and continue to exist in this material world (they are not delivered). They face the same peril as a sea-faring merchant without his captain." (S.B.10.87.33)

This indicates that when we follow Sri Gurudev's instructions and practice *bhajan* under his subservience, we gain the knowledge of Bhagavad-*dharma*[1]. By the *kripâ* of Sri Gurudev, obstacles never overwhelm us and our mind quickly becomes unwavering.

In fact Sri Krishna expresses his powerful mercy through Sri Gurudev; He is more compassionate than Sri Krishna. Sri Gurudev is God in the incarnation of a devotee. In the transcendental abode he resides in the form of Sri Gurudev on the left side of Himself (Sri *Bhagavân*). He spreads extreme mercy – much more than Sri Krishna and awakens in us knowledge about Himself. *Shruti* is testimony to this –

"âchâryavân purusho veda"

Meaning - "Who surrenders at the feet of the Spiritual Master, can know God".

2. Taking dikshâ and instructions from Sri Gurudev – We should take *dikshâ* (initiation) from Sri Gurudev. The initiation should comprise of 'Sri Krishna-*Mantra*'. And we should learn the Bhâgavat dharma from him. After all '*dikshâ*' is the process by which we get enlightenment and destroy our sins. 'Enlightenment' indicates that we know the '*dikshâ-mantra'* as non-different from Sri *Bhagavân* and we realize our special relationship with Him.

In the scriptures we find many *mantra*s with relation to *dikshâ*. However Sri Krishna-*mantra* is the most important of all. Again, amongst Sri Krishna-*mantra*s, some pertain to His Vrindâban pastimes while others are related to His Mathurâ and Dwârakâ pastimes.

> Just as Sri Krishna's Vrindâvan-*leelâs* as a cowherd-boy are the sweetest, the mantras that reveal His su*prem*ely sweet *ras* of Brajadhâm are the sweetest. Hence the ten-syllable and eighteen-syllable *mantras* are the best and we call them as 'the King of *Mantras'*.

Certain scientific processes can turn lesser metals into gold; similarly by taking *dikshâ* in proper manner we can turn our material body into spiritual and get the right to serve Sri Krishna.

"When the devotee surrenders during *dikshâ*, Sri Krishna makes him His Own. He converts the devotee's material body into spiritual and he serves Sri Krishna with his transcendental body." – (Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu in C.C.Antya.4.184-185)

After taking *dikshâ* it is necessary to learn Sri Bhâgavat Dharma from Sri Gurudev –

[1] Divine path

"We should consider Sri Gurudev as dear to us as our life and make him our worshiped Deity. We should be free from arrogance, be submissive to Sri Gurudev and learn Bhâgavat Dharma from him. When we approach the Spiritual Master to learn Bhâgavat Dharma we should serve him in such a manner so as to please Sri Hari Who has made us His Own." – (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd's explanation of S.B.11.3.22)

3. Serve Sri Gurudev – We should consider Sri Gurudev as our well-wisher, dear most friend and the embodiment of the su*preme* most being Sri Hari. Considering him thus we should serve him. If we do not have very strong faith that Sri Gurudev is divine manifestation, we can never gain the knowledge of the highest truth. If we think of the Spiritual master as mundane all our endeavors become fruitless.

"Sri Gurudev is the torch of knowledge and is the very embodiment of the divine one. Whoever has the corrupt intelligence to think "he is human" is only taking an elephant-bath (all his spiritual endeavors are fruitless)."- (S.B.7.15.26)

So we should serve Sri Gurudev most carefully since we are able to please Sri Hari by his blessing alone.

yo mantrah sa guruh sâkshât yo guruh sa harih swayam,
gururyasya bhavettushtasya tushto harih swayam."

Meaning - "*Mantra*, Guru and Sri Hari are one and the same. When the Spiritual Master is pleased with a devotee, even Sri Hari is pleased with him."

4. Walk on the footsteps of the pure devotees – We should follow in the footprints of the pure devotees since they have obtained Sri Hari-bhakti.

Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu has quoted the following statement from Sri Skanda Purân –
"The previous *Mahâ*jans have obtained Sri Hari-bhakti without any labor. To achieve this they followed a path that is without stress and it is auspicious. It is our duty to follow that path."

Sri Vyâsdev has said –
"The rules concerning *Dharma* are very difficult to comprehend. Therefore we should follow the path taken by the *Mahâ*jans since they have attained what is good."

The *Mahâ*jans behave strictly according to the scriptures. This is why Sri Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has immediately quoted Sri Brahma-Yâmal –

"If we practice single-pointed *Bhakti* yet neglect the injunctions of *Shruti*, *Smriti, Purân* and *Pancharâtra* then we simply create trouble."

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this statement –
"If we practice single-pointed *Bhakti* without following the injunctions of the scriptures, it is not good, since this means that we do not have faith in the Vedic scriptures. Here we are not referring to those who do not follow the scriptural injunctions because they are not aware of them or they may be simply lazy. We are referring only to those who know the rules yet disregard them because they do not consider them true. Their so-called 'single-pointed devotion' is an eye-wash since it is not according to the scriptures."

Believers respect the scriptures and forsake what is forbidden by them only to please Sri Krishna. Therefore a devotee naturally wishes to do what the scriptures prescribe and forsake what they forbid, since faith rests on the scriptures alone.

5. We should be inquisitive about the devotional practice of the pure devotees - We should ask questions such as - what sort of devotional practice did the pure devotees perform? How did they gain Sri Krishna's *sevâ*? We should be eager to know these facts and ask learned devotees about the process of devotion.

If we are extremely curious about devotional practice we will become absorbed in this topic. This will make us somewhat interested in *Bhakti*, our heart will become pure and the facts about *bhakti* will arise in our mind spontaneously. We cannot realize *Bhakti* by using logic alone. Here by 'interest' we mean that the devotee has an earlier *sanskâr* by which he considers Srimad Bhâgavatam and such scriptures as the highest and has extremely firm faith in the pure devotees and the spiritual master. This is how we understand the true knowledge of *bhakti* – we cannot realize it with dry logic. Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu proves that we should inquire about the rules of *Bhakti* by quoting Nârad Purân –

"Those who are extremely eager to learn about the path followed by the pure devotees achieve the highest goal within a very short time."

6. To forsake material enjoyment for Sri Krishna's pleasure - Our minds are conditioned to take pleasure in worldly sound, touch, beauty, taste and smell. We always seek sense gratification. This desire is the root cause of material suffering and digression. Our goal should be to give up sensual pleasures and gradually engage the senses in relishing Sri Krishna's divine beauty and *ras*. If we have strong attachment for sense gratification, it is but natural that we will not be deeply inclined towards *bhajan*. Yet, if we do not perform *bhajan* with intense absorption we cannot please Sri Krishna. In fact if we want to obtain Sri Krishna we must please Him. To make Sri Krishna happy we must give up material enjoyment and the desire for such pleasure. We see in Sri Padma Purân –

"From time to time you have forsaken sense gratification; therefore the permanent treasure of Vaikuntha is waiting to welcome you (you will be given a grand welcome and the treasure of Vaikuntha will belong to you - that treasure will never exhaust unlike material prosperity that is temporary)."

We have a natural attraction for material pleasures. It does not go easily. However, the Vedas state that –

"*âhâr shuddou sattva-shuddhi,*
sattva-shuddhou dhruvâ-smritih,
smriti-lâbhe sarva-granthinâm vipra-mokshah."

Meaning - "Eating pure food purifies our *chitta*. When our *chitta* becomes pure we remember Sri *Bhagavân*; along with that we naturally get rid of material desires."

Food nourishes and energizes the body and mind. Pure food cleanses the body, senses and the mind. This makes us more easily engrossed in *bhajan.* Therefore if we want to attain the purest state it is necessary to be very careful about food.

7. We should reside in the holy places of Sri Krishna – It is easy to get *bhakti* when we live in the places where the Lord has performed His pastimes – such as Sri Vrindâban, Sri Nabadweep, Sri Kshetra (Puri) and on the banks of the Gangâ. These places remind us of His divine pastimes and they create an ambience for *bhajan*. We also get *darshan* of pure devotees and saints since they too reside in such places. Otherwise it is very difficult to get their *darshan*. It also shows our surrender.

tavâsmiti vadan vâchâ tathaiva manasâ vidan,
tatsthânamâshritastanvâ modate sharanâgatah .

"O Lord, who says 'I am Yours' and believes the same in his heart and joyously resides in Your *leelâ-sthals*[1] is indeed surrendered unto You."

8. We should accept what is necessâry for our living –

"We should accept whatever is necessary for our living; if we accept either less or more than that we will stray from the spiritual path." (Nârad Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this as – "The *sâdhak* should earn and spend money in such a manner that *bhajan* should go on." The householder should earn by honest means, execute their duties and practice *bhajan*. Until we reach the stage of renunciation we should continue in this manner. If we attempt to earn more than what is barely necessary to maintain *bhakti,* our appetite for *bhajan* will decrease. On the other hand, if we earn less then our mind will be stressed. Therefore it is best to accept that much wealth as is necessary to execute family life and carry on with our *bhakti*."

9. We should revere Hari-bâsar – We call the end of Ekâdashi and the beginning of Dwâdashi as '**Hari-bâsar'**. Hari-bâsar also includes other Vaishnav-fasts as mentioned in the scriptures, such as – Janmâshtami, Râdhâshtami, Râm-navami, Nrisimha-chaturdashi, Shiva-chaturdashi, the appearance days of Lord Gourânga, Lord Nityânanda, Lord Advaita etc. We should always forsake the '*biddhâ*' days and observe pure *vrata.* When we keep a *vrata*, we please Sri Krishna and if we do not, we commit great offence.

Many fast but they give up just food. In reality, 'fast' signifies –

"upavrittasya pâpebhyo yo bâsas-tad-gunaih saha,
upavâsah sa vigneya nopavâsastu langhanam."

Meaning - "Fasting does not mean merely giving up *Mahâprasâdam*. We should avoid all material activities and spend the day in hearing and glorifying Sri Krishna's name, excellences and divine pastimes. This is fasting in the true sense."

10. We should respect dhâtri*, ashwattha* etc. – "We should worship, pay obeisance and meditate on the *ashwattha*[2]*, Tulsi, dhâtri*[3]*,* cow, *brahmin* and Vaishnavs. This destroys our sins." – (Skanda Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained further –

"Ashwattha is a majestic manifestation of Sri *Bhagavân*, hence it is worthy of worship. Sri *Bhagavân* descends to protect the cow and the *brahmin;* therefore even pure devotees worship them. Tulsi and the Vaishnavs are the topmost, so all of us should worship them. Especially if we desire *prem* it becomes inevitable for us to worship Tulsi and the Vaishnavs. This is an intricate part of our *bhajan."*

"We begin *bhakt*i with these ten rules." – (B.R.S.)

This means that if we do not follow these ten laws, we do not start with *bhajan*. So these are the "do's". Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd now mentions ten "don'ts". They are as follows.

11. We should reject the association of non-devotees – They belong to two classes –

(a) Who do not perform *bhajan* is 'bhagavad-vimukh' (turned away from Sri *Bhagavân*)

[1] Holy Places where Sri Bhagavân has performed His Divine pastimes
[2] Ficus religiosa
[3] Emblica officinalis or Indian gooseberry

(b) Those who oppose the devotees, devotion and Sri *Bhagavân* are 'Bhagavad-vidweshi' (envious of God).

We should reject the association of both.

"It is better to live in a cage of fire than suffer in the company of one who does not meditate on Sri Krishna." – (Kâtyâyan Samhitâ quoted in B.R.S.)

The point is that the association of non-devotees is detrimental for our devotional knowledge, material detachment and *bhajan*, so we should reject their company at all costs. If we keep their company our materialistic tendency is bound to increase and we get attached to all the things that are not conducive for *bhajan*. Just like an infectious disease the bad qualities of a non-devotee attack us and hence his association is dangerous for our spiritual health. Of course we cannot call a chance meeting with a non-devotee as 'association'. Even then we should accept him as a venomous snake ready-to-sting and run away from him trembling in fear. In fact to reject the company of non-devotees is part of Vaishnav-etiquette also.

"Vaishnav-etiquette requires us to reject bad company that comprises of '*stri-sangi*'[1] and non-Krishna-devotee." – (C.C.M.22.49)

Sri *Bhagavân's* devotee can absorb our mind so deeply in Him by describing His beauty, qualities and sweetness that even Sri *Bhagavân* Himself cannot achieve; similarly a lusty man can make us deeply attached to sense gratification such that even a woman herself cannot do. Therefore we cannot over-emphasize the need to reject the company of such men at all costs.

12. We should not make too many disciples –
"Sri Nârad Muni has said – Do not make too many disciples. Do not study too many texts. Do not earn your living by giving commentaries on the scriptures. Never ever start building religious institutions." – (S.B.7.13.8 quoted in B.R.S.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this point further –

"Read 'Do not make many disciples' as 'do not make unqualified disciples', since preceptors such as Nârad have given initiation to many. If we do not make disciples the *sampradây* faces the danger of extinction and we are accused of being miserly with the dispension of spiritual knowledge. However it is wrong to initiate unworthy people simply to increase the fold. 'Many' refers to non-devout unqualified disciples."

Sridharswâmipâd has written – "*nânubadhneeta pralobhanâdinâ balânnâpâdayet".* Meaning - "You should never make disciples by using either temptation or force."

It is *aparâdh* to make disciples to gain money, fame, power or increase one's fan-following.

"*ashraddhâne vimukhe'pi-shrinvanti yashchopadeshah shiva-nâmâparâdhah"*

Meaning - "It is an *aparâdh* to instruct someone in the Holy Name if he lacks scriptural faith and is not interested in hearing the Holy Name."

This means that one is qualified to become a disciple if he has such faith and is interested in the Holy Name.

13.We should not start great projects – When we take up mega-projects like building institutions, missionaries etc. it results in turning away from God. When we get involved in building temples etc. we lack the time and energy for *bhajan*. Srimad Bhâgavatam says – "*nârambhayet kwachit"* – which means – "Never ever start religious institutions." How much

[1] Men who are attached to sexual pleasure. Here the point to be noted is, C.C. does not tell us to give up the company of the opposite sex but rather with those who are attached to sex.

such endeavors affect our *bhajan* is evident from what is happening in the institutions today. The residents of religious institutions are in disagreement with each other, they are constantly fighting that even results in court-cases! The religious institutions are burning examples of all these grievous incidents.

Sri Krishna cites the character of a loving devotee in Sri Gita –

"*sarvârambha-parityâgi yo mad-bhaktah sa me priyah"*

Meaning - "O Arjun, He is my dear devotee who does not indulge in building big projects."
– (B.G.12.16)

Sridhar Swâmipâd has explained this verse as -

"*sarva-drishta-adrishtârthan-ârambha-anudyamân parityaktum sheelah yasya sah"*

Meaning - "The one who rejects mega-endeavors is dear to Sri Krishna."

14.Avoid studying too many texts and explanations –

This statement refers to the texts that oppose *bhakti*. Sri Nârad Muni has said –

"*granthânnaivâbhyased bahun na vyâkhyâm-upayunjeeta*"

Meaning - "Do not study too many texts and do not earn your living by lecturing on the scriptures."

Srimad-Bhâgavatam is the essence of all Vedic teachings. The Vedas are like a wish-fulfilling tree and Srimad-Bhâgavatam is like an extremely ripe and sweet fruit of this tree. In *Kaliyug* mankind is enveloped in darkness and Srimad-Bhâgavatam is shining brilliantly like the sun to show us the way. It is self-luminous. There is no scripture that is so full of love. Srimad-Bhâgavatam is extraordinary and sets us on the path of love and God. Our Goswâmis have composed texts of *bhakti*-principles and *ras* that are following the dictum of Srimad-Bhâgavatam. Therefore they too are of the same status. These texts are enough for us to relish *ras* and to gain the knowledge of *bhajan.*

Some people earn their living by reciting Srimad-Bhâgavatam, this is offensive and hence to be rejected.

15. We should not lack *bhakti* in practical life –

"The *sâdhak* who performs *bhajan* such as meditation should not get worried when there is lack of food and shelter or when food and shelter are destroyed; instead he should remember Sri Hari." – (Padma Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse as –

"This is the way of Sri Hari's devotee. A *sâdhak* who loves *sevâ* is satisfied with whatever he gets and continue to execute loving service; he should not show humility by begging too much. In all practical sense, he should not be a miser."

16.We should not succumb to sorrow –

"If our heart is full of misery and depression, how can Mukunda reveal Himself to us?" – (Padma Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

It is but natural to feel hopeless and miserable when we lose a dear one such as our child, spouse, parents etc. However since we are *sâdhaks*, we should quickly remember Sri Hari and realize that the body and things related to the body are meant to perish. We should not let sorrow overwhelm us.

17.We should not disrespect *devatâs* –

It is true that even the *devatâs* worship Sri Hari*;* however we should not disrespect Brahma, Rudra and other *devatâs.*

"Although a **devotee worships only Sri Krishna**, he should realize that *devatas* and *devis* are His devotees as well and so he should not disrespect them."

– (Padma purân quoted in B.R.S.)

"*anya deb anya shâstra nindâ nâ koribe"* – (C.C.)

Meaning - "Do not slander other *devatâs* and *shâstras".*

Also we should not show contempt for those who worship *devatâs.* They seek material pleasure and hence they engage in such worship. It is their nature to be loyal to *devatâs* and they are qualified only for that. If the *devatâs* feel true mercy for them they too will become free of material desires and gain the opportunity to practice Sri Krishna-*bhajan*. Then they will be truly blessed. Janasharmâ of Sri Brihad-Bhagavatâmrita was a worshiper of Kâmâkhya devi and later on became a Krishna-devotee.

18.We should not cause anxiety to anyone –

"Do not cause anxiety to any living being physically or mentally". – (C.C.)

This is our singular duty.

"A devotee should behave sweetly with every living being just as a parent treats a child. He never causes anxiety to anyone. Lord Hrishikesh is quickly pleased with such a devotee for his consciousness is pure.' – *Mahâ*bhârat quoted in (B.R.S.)

Sri *Bhagavân* has declared this with His sacred lips in Bhagavad-Gita as well –

"O Arjun, who does not trouble anyone, neither can anyone make him agitated, who is free of material joy, anger, fear and anxiety – he is dear to me." – (B.G.12.15)

19.We should forsake *seva-aprâdh* and *nâm-aparâdh* –

What is '*aparâdh'?* Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written in Bhakti-Sandarbha (300th chapter) –

"When we say that a devotee should have '*shraddhâ*' and '*bhakti'* it naturally means that we should be respectful. When we commit an offence it indicates disrespect. Therefore disrespect is the root cause for offence and we should stop being disrespectful."

Seva-aparâdh and *Nâm-aparâdh* are offences we commit at the sacred feet of *Bhakti devi.* After all, we worship *Bhakti devi* when we hear, chant the Holy Name etc. We should place her on the highest pedestal. We should treat her with utmost reverence. It is necessary to love and respect all the devotees who are on the path of *bhakti* and feel pleased when someone glorifies them – otherwise we are committing *aparâdh*.

Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu quotes Varâha Purân in this context –

"Sri Varâha dev told Dharani devi (Mother Earth) – Dear Vasundharâ, A Vaishnav should very carefully avoid all the *aparâdhs* while serving me. They are as follows –

1) To enter Sri Bhagavân's *Mandir* riding in a vehicle or with footwear.

2) not to take *darshan* of Sri Krishna's festivals
3) not to pay obeisance to the Deity
4) To glorify or serve Sri *Bhagavân* when we are in a state of '*ucchishta*'[1] and contamination.
5) To pay obeisance with one hand
6) To circumambulate (turn round and round) in front of the Deity or to circumambulate a *devatâ* in front of Him
7) To spread our legs and sit in front of Him
8) To sit in front of Him with our arms around our knees
9) To sleep in front of the Deity
10) To eat in front of Him
11) To tell lies in front of Him
12) To talk loudly in front of Him
13) To chit-chat in front of Him
14) To cry out in material sorrow
15) To quarrel
16) To chastise anyone before the Deity
17) To bless anyone or to accept obeisance in front of the Deity
18) To speak cruelly to anyone
19) We should not wrap ourselves in blanket while paying obeisance or serving Him
20) To blaspheme others in front of Him
21) To praise others in front of Him
22) To use vulgar language in front of Him
23) To break wind in front of Him
24) It is an offence if we bring less costly items to serve Him in spite of being able to afford more valuable things
25) To eat food that has not been offered to Him.
26) Not offering the seasonal fruit and flower to the Deity
27) If we give the first portion of anything to someone else and then offer Him from the remaining, it is an offence.
28) To sit with our backs turned to the Deity
29) Not to glorify our Spiritual Master
30) To praise oneself
31) To blaspheme the *devatâs*
32) To pay obeisance to someone in front of the Deity, to pay obeisance to the left side of the Deity or facing Him or inside the sanctum sanctorum.

These are the 32 *sevâ-aparâdhs.*

There are some more offences that we should avoid such as –

- to eat food offered by a materialist
- to touch the Deity in the dark
- to offer food after touching untouchable animals like dog etc.
- to speak during *archanam*
- to get up for passing stool and urine during *archanam*
- to offer incense before offering perfume and garland
- to enter the *Mandir* without washing hands and feet and without taking a bath after intercourse
- to serve the Deity after touching the dead, offered lamp and contaminated objects
- to serve Their Lordships wearing red, blue and dirty clothes or wearing clothes worn by someone else and unwashed
- to serve the Deity in an angry mood
- after returning from the crematorium
- when the food in the stomach is not digested
- after taking addictives such as drugs

[1] Without washing our hands and mouth after eating or drinking

- after taking an oil-massage

Other scriptures also instruct us to forsake some more *seva-aparâdhs* such as –

- to worship the Deity by disregarding the rules stated in the *Bhakti-shâstras*
- to disregard the *Bhakti-shâstras* and uphold other scriptures
- to chew betel-leaf in front of the Deity
- to worship Sri *Bhagavân* with flowers kept on castor leaf
- to worship at inauspicious hours
- to sit on the floor or on a raised seat during *archanam*
- to touch the Deity with left hand while pouring water (bathing) Him – the liquid should not touch our left hand and then pour on Him
- offering dry or rotten flowers
- to spit during *archanam*
- to feel proud that none can worship like me
- to draw a crooked *tilak*
- to enter the *Mandir* without washing the feet
- to offer and partake of food cooked by non-Vaishnavas
- to dress up the Deity or offer *bhog* within a non-Vaishnava's eye-sight

Now we appreciate that *seva-aparâdh* means all acts that show even the slightest disregard for the Deity or show in any manner that we have but the highest love, care, and faith and respect for Him. We should carefully avoid all the *seva-aparâdhs*. It is possible that we may commit them, not knowingly, but by chance; in that case if we take the Holy Name daily and recite the various hymns and glories then the *seva-aparâdh* is destroyed. However if we perform them knowingly and then recite glorifications because we know that it will destroy the offence, it gets converted into a *'Nâm-aparâdh'*, that is – 'to commit a sin on the strength of the Holy Name' and it is very difficult to get out of this one!

Nâm-aparâdhs are 10 –

1. to blaspheme a devotee
2. to consider the names of Sri Vishnu and Sri Shiva as independent
3. to disregard the spiritual master
4. to blaspheme the Vedas and scriptures following them
5. to consider the glory of the Holy Name an exaggeration
6. to give some interpretation to the Holy Name
7. to commit a sin on the strength of the Holy Name
8. to consider Sri Harinâm equal to pious activities
9. to instruct in Holy Name a person who lacks faith in it.
10. not to love the Holy Name in spite of hearing its glory

"Who has committed all sorts of offences will become free of them when he takes the shelter of Sri Hari; a sinner who offends Sri Hari may get rid of it by taking refuge of the Holy Name; however if we commit an offence unto the Holy Name who is everybody's friend, we shall certainly suffer." -(Padma Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

20.We should not tolerate the blasphemy of Sri Krishna and His devotees

How can we say that we love Sri Krishna and his devotees if we bear their criticism?

"Who does not leave the place after hearing the blasphemy of Sri *Bhagavân* or His devotee falls down since all his *sukritis* get destroyed."(S.B.10.74.40 quoted B.R.S.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse further as –

"Srimad-Bhâgavatam (4.4.17) orders us to leave the place only if we are incapable of doing anything; however if we have any power it is our duty to cut of the slandering tongue; and if

we cannot do this we should give up our body. Sri Durgâ devi lost her self-control when she heard her father Daksha criticizing Shivji and said – "When an independent person is not capable of protesting he should cover his ears and leave the place in which Lord Shiva who protects *dharma* is criticized; and if he has the power he should cut off the tongue of the slanderer and then give up his body." – (B.S.265)

Vaishnavs are more humble than a blade of grass, offer respect to others, yet do not desire respect. They do not wish to stress anyone by body, mind or speech, hence it is best for us to cover our ears, meditate on Sri *Bhagavân* and leave the place.

These 20 points are the gateway to *bhakti*. Amongst these the first 10 are necessary to obey as our *sâdhan bhakti* commences and we should shun the next 10 as 'don'ts'. The next points are mostly related to certain activities.

21.We should don sacred marks on our body such as tilak and tulsi-

"Vaishnavs who decorate themselves with Tulsi and lotus-deed-necklaces, draw Sri Hari's sacred feet beautified with symbols of conch-shell, discus etc., whose foreheads dazzle with *tilak* – they definitely purify the world."-(Padma Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

The scriptures also state –

yagnopaveet-vad dhârya kanthe tulasi-mâlikâ
kshana-mâra-parityâgât vishnu-drohi bhaven-narah.
ashouche cha-py-anâchâre kale-akâle cha sarvadâ,
tulasi-mâlikâm dhatte sa yâti paramam padam."

Meaning - "We should don the Tulsi necklace constantly just like the sacred thread. If we detach it even for a moment we become anti-Vishnu. Even during child-birth, dealing with the dead, and intercourse, or at any other time – if we continue to sport the Tulsi necklace we shall attain the highest realm."

These statements prove the glory of wearing sacred insignia. There are people who say – "*Bhakti* should be in our heart, what is the need to wear Tulsi beads and *tilak*?' If they read these statements of the Holy Scriptures they will realize how much spiritual strength they confer on a devotee, and when we forsake them the loss is tremendous. For a Vaishnav the Tulsi necklace and *tilak* are reminders of his *swarup*, they are conducive for self-surrender and hence boost our *bhajan*.

22. We should write the Holy Name on our body -

"Who write Sri Krishna's names on their body with *chandan* etc. purify the world and attain Sri Hari's abode which is su*preme*." – (Padma Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

The Holy Name is non-different from Sri *Bhagavân,* hence it is indeed *sach-chidânanda*. When the Holy Name touches our body it is good for our health and general well-being also, what to speak of spiritual welfare. The saints advise us to serve the Holy Name with all our senses – we serve Him with our skin by writing the Holy Name on our body.

23. We should wear *prasâdi* garland –

Flowers, garlands, *chandan*, Tulsi etc taken from the Deities are called '*nirmâlya'.* When this '*nirmâlya'* touches our body it destroys *anartha* and grants us love for His holy feet.

"Uddhav *Mahâ*shay is saying in Srimad-Bhâgavatam (11.6.46) – quoted in B.R.S. – My dear Lord, We are your servants; we shall don garlands, *chandan*, clothes and ornaments enjoyed (worn) by You and thus we shall easily overcome *mâyâ*."

This proves how we can destroy non-Krishna desires and gain Sri Krishna-*bhakti* by using materials offered to the Deity.

24. We should dance in front of the Deity –

"Who dances happily in front of the Deity with *bhâv* abd *bhakti* annihilates all the sins he has accumulated in hundreds of *manvantars."*(Dwârakâ-Mâhâtmyam quoted in B.R.S.)

How simple it is to sing and dance in front of the Deity – in fact it is an enjoyable experience too – yet it su*prem*ely pleases Sri *Bhagavân*!

25. We should pay obeisance –

"We cannot compare the outcome of paying a single obeisance to Sri Krishna with the result of ten complete *Ashwamedh* sacrifices. We still get rebirth after performing *Ashwamedh* sacrifice, whereas who pays obeisance to Sri Krishna is released from the cycle of birth and death."
– (Nârad Muni quoted in B.R.S.)

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd explains 'obeisance' –

"*swâpakarsha-bodha-anukula-vyâpâra-vishesho namaskârah"*

Meaning - "'obeisance' is an act by which we degrade ourselves yet it is good for us."

There are four types of obeisance –
- *Abhivâdan*[1] (to touch the feet after exclaiming "Jay" or other words of glorification)
- *Sâshtânga*[2] (to touch the feet by fully prostrating on the ground – this indicates the surrender with 8 organs - feet, knees, chest, eyes, head, hands, speech and mind
- *Panchânga* (to touch the lotus feet with 5 organs – hands, head, knees, speech and mind)
- Join our palms and touch to our head

Padma Purân says –

"*ahamkritirmakârah syân-nakârah-tan-nishedhakah,*
tasmâttunamasâ kshetriswâtantryam pratishidhyati."

Meaning - "'*na'* means 'no' and 'ma' signifies *'ahamkâr'* (false ego). Hence *'namaskâr'* or obeisance is the best way to get rid of false pride."

When we pay obeisance to Sri Gurudev, we should touch our head to his feet and pay *panchânga* or *sâshtânga* obeisance with prayer.

26.We should rise (from sitting or lying position) when we get *darshan* of the Deity -

We should stand up when the temple doors open for darshan, and even when Sri Gurudev or senor Vaishnavs arrive. Or else it is not good for our welfare. When we arise, it is a mark of respect and it destroys inauspiciousness.

27.When we see a procession of the Deity and *Guruvarga* we should follow them -

"Even dog-eaters become as adorable as Vishnu if they accompany Sri *Bhagavân's* chariot, procession etc. at the side, behind or in front." -(Bhavishyottar Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

28.We should visit the *Mandirs* in the Holy places such as Sri Vrindâban where Sri *Bhagavân* has performed His divine pastimes, and take His *darshan* –

[1] = hail
[2] Sa= with; ashta = eight; anga = organs.

When we visit the holy places we get the association of pure devotees; we feel blessed in their company, and especially so in Vrindâban since this Dhâm Prabhu has inconceivable potency. We shall describe this later.

29.We should circumambulate the Deity and Tulsi devi –

The right way to do *parikramâ* is to keep the Deity to our right and circumambulate 4 times. This yields very quick and good result – it is better than bathing in the Gangâ. *Parikramâ* of Sri Girirâj in Braja-dhâm has very great glory and fulfils our desire swiftly. Many faithful devotees do Sri Girirâj Parikramâ on the Full moon day, new moon day, on special occasions and in the Purushottam month.

30.*Archanam* - it is the process by which we make offerings to the Deity after purifying ourselves and with *mantras.* It is the bounden duty of every initiated devotee to perform *archanam,* otherwise the consequence is terrible. During *archanam* we must never ever consider the Deity as an 'idol' or 'image', because He is really Sri *Bhagavân*. All those who perform *archanam* after initiation attain Sri *Bhagavân's* eternal and blissful abode.

We should do *archanam* only after we learn the scriptural method of worshipping. **Although we may worship lovingly but not in the prescribed manner we get only one hundredth the result**. We get 0.01% result only because we have done the *pujâ* with love and care – without these we shall not gain anything. Hence it is necessary to perform pujâ according to the scriptural injunctions.

During *Yogpeeth-sevâ* we should meditate on our *siddha-deha*, be present near Sri Krishna Who is surrounded by Srimati Râdhârâni and the *sakhis.* Then we should worship as per the instructions of our Spiritual Master. After this we should worship externally with external paraphernalia. This *Yogpeeth-seva* is the soul of external *seva.* Without *Yogpeeth-seva,* the external seva is meaningless. The householders must serve the Deity to the best of their ability with the costliest items they can afford. If they serve only in meditation like the penniless recluse they fall under the category '*vitta-shâthya'* (monetary fraud). If we make someone else perform the *pujâ* as our representative, it means we are lazy and just 'keeping the routine'. This signifies irreverence and hence we should avoid it.

31. *Paricharyâ* – (to serve directly) –

'*Paricharyâ*' indicates that we should serve the Deity like a king – give Him royal treatment. We should clean the items used for *seva* and serve Him with fan etc.

Sriman-Nârad Muni has said –

"*muhurtam vâ muhurtârddham yastishtheddhari-mandire, sa yâti paramam sthânam kimu shushrushane ratâh."* – (B.R.S.)

Meaning - "Who resides in the temple of Sri Hari for a moment or even half a moment, he attains the su*preme* abode; then how much more a devotee who serves the Deity will gain – can we guess?"

There are many points in *archanam* and *paricharyâ.* Sri Hari-Bhakti-Vilâs has described them in detail. If we can engage even in one such *seva* our life is blessed. We should serve the Lord with objects suitable for that particular time and place[1].

32.We should sing songs pertaining to Sri Hari's Holy Name, beauty and pastimes -

[1] For example in winter we should use warm water to bathe the Deity and should not fan Him. Also He will feel more comfortable with woolen garlands than flower ones. In summer we should dress Him in cotton clothes.

"The scriptures say - Do not sing any song other than Sri *Bhagavân's* glory. Therefore the *brahmin* sang Sri Vâsudev's glorification constantly and attained His abode. That song yielded better result than even the glorification of Sri Rudra (Shiva)." – (B.R.S.)

33. *Sankirtan* or Congregational singing of the Holy Name – *Sankirtan* means to chant Sri *Bhagavân's* name, qualities and pastimes loudly. Also when many devotees unite and sing the Holy Name together we call it '*sankirtan'. Sankirtan* is the *'yuga-dharma'* in the *Kaliyug.* Hence we should follow the other rules of *bhajan* always accompanied by *Sankirtan.*

"When we perform the nine types of *bhakti* we have to accompany them with *Nâm-sankirtan*, otherwise our endeavor will not be successful." – (C.C.Madhya.15.107)

Often we cannot perform some parts of *bhajan* (e.g. *archanam*) perfectly. However it becomes perfect when we take the Holy Name along with it. The Holy Name itself is Sri *Bhagavân.* It is the 'Sound-incarnation' of Sri Hari. It is absolute. Therefore it has the ability to fulfill our short-comings while performing the other parts of *bhajan.* With the help of *Nâm-sankirtan* we can easily get Bhagavat-*prem* (divine love) and side-by-side we also get rid of material attachments.

"The nine types of *Bhakti* are the topmost *Bhajan* and have great power to give us Krishna-*prem* and Krishna. However *Nâm-sankirtan* is the best of all –and if we chant the Holy Name inoffensively we get the treasure called '*prem*'."– (C.C.Antya.4.65-66)

Nâm-sankirtan is so powerful that nothing can stop it. Only *aparâdhs* have the strength to pose obstacles on its path. Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has Himself instructed us how we can avoid *aparâdh* and attain the main objective of *Nâm-sankirtan,* that is '*prem*' –

"Hear O Swarup and Râmânanda Roy! This is the manner in which we should chant the Holy Name so as to attain *prem* –

trinâdapi suneechena taroreva sahishnunâ,

amâninâ mânadena kirtaniyah sada harih.

Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has explained this verse as follows –

A devotee should have excellent qualities and yet consider himself more worthless than a blade of grass. Also he should be as tolerant as a tree in two aspects – a tree never protests when you cut it; it dries up, yet does not ask for water. Moreover it gives its fruits to whosoever desires them. It bears heat and rain, all the while lending shelter and protection to others. Similarly a Vaishnav should possess excellent qualities and yet be devoid of pride. He should respect every living being because he is aware that Sri Krishna is present in all.

When a devotee takes the Holy Name in this manner he gets love for the sacred feet of Sri Krishna." – (C.C.Antya.20.16-21)

Srila Krishnadâs Kavirâj Goswâmi has mentioned that the Lord has declared with His Holy lips and has commanded –

"I give a clarion call with upraised arms – do add this verse with the Holy Name and wear it like a garland round your neck. Obey the Lord by following this instruction and you shall most certainly attain the sacred feet of Sri Krishna." – (C.C.Âdi.17.32-33)

This means that if we behave according to Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu's instructions and chant the Holy Name, the one and only obstacle, Vaishnav-aparâdh will never occur. It is also the tremendously powerful obstacle. But, if we are more humble than a blade of gras, and as tolerant as a tree, we shall never commit a Vaishnav-offence. Then we can very easily gain the good fortune of attaining *prem*.

There are different types of *kirtan* (hymns) such as *'leelâ-kirtan'* (glorifying the divine pastimes) and *'guna-kirtan'* (glorifying the divine qualities) -

"Sri Prahlâd said – O Lord Narsimha, I am your humble servant who has received Your mercy. You are my dear well-wisher and the Su*preme* Being. Brahmâ **glorifies Your pastimes**[1]. I shall hear them constantly in the company of blessed *paramhamsas* who reside at Your lotus-feet. Then I shall get rid of material attachments and easily cross over mountainous sorrow."

-(S.B.7.9.18 quoted in B.R.S.)

The power of *'guna-kirtan'* is as follows – "The great devotees say that our *tapasyâ, Vedic*-study, performing nice *yagna,* uttering Vedic hymns perfectly, knowledge and alms-giving - all yield just one result – and that is we start glorifying *Bhagavân* Sri Hari's excellent qualities"

– (S.B.1.5.22 quoted in B.R.S.)

34. *Jap* –

When we utter a *mantra* very softly it is called *'jap'*. It is part of meditation. *Jap* is of three types –

a. **Vocal** – when we perform *'kirtan'* we take the *mantra* loudly

b. **Soft** –in this we take the *mantra* so softly that only we are able to hear it and no one else

c. **Mental** – we take the *mantra* without vibrating the tongue. In 'mental *jap'* we meditate on the meaning of the *mantra* and repeat it. It is part of meditation.

Taking the *Mantra*[2] in mind is better than repeating it softly and it is better than loud utterance. Whereas in the case of chanting the *Mahâmantra*, loud chanting is better than soft chanting which is better than chanting in the mind. We should learn the rules of taking the *mantra* and its meaning from Sri Gurudev.

35. Talking – "Whatever little you have spoken to Sri Hari has opened the doorway for your liberation." – (Padma Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

This talking is of many types such as **praying, expressing humility, displaying eagerness** etc.

> We should talk to Sri Krishna and tell Him about the feelings in our heart. This is praying.

Example of **praying** –

"My dear Lord, just as a young man gets deeply attached to a young woman and vice versa, please makes my heart engrossed in You." – (Padma Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

Example of **humility** –

"Dear Purushottam, none in the whole world is as sinful and offensive as me. I am embarrassed to even request You to please forgive my sins." – (Padma Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

Example of **intense eagerness** (**lâlasâmayi prârthanâ**)–

kadâham yamunâteere nâmâni tava keertayan,

udvâshpah pundarikâksha! rachayishyâmi tândavam?"

[1] This indicates *guna-kiran.*
[2] Here 'mantra' refers to Kâm-beej, Kâm-Gâyatri, Gour-mantra/Gâyatri, Radha-mantra/Gâyatri etc. and not to Mahâmantra.

"Dear Pundarikâksha, when will that day arrive in my life when I shall burst into a *tândav*[1] on the banks of the Yamuna with tears flowing from my eyes, while singing Your Holy Name?"

Only when the *sâdhak* attains the stage of *rati* such prayer is possible. **Lâlasâmayi prayer is the right prayer for a *râgânugâ* devotee**.

36.We should recite glorification in front of Sri *Bhagavân* –

There are many eulogies in Gitâ, Srimad-Bhâgavatam, and bhakti-texts such as Goutamiya Tantra. The *Mahâ*jans have composed many sweet glorifications. We should recite them repeatedly. The *râgânugâ* devotees who wish to perform intimate and intense *bhajan* should recite the *stavas*[2] from Stavamâlâ by Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd, Sri Stavâvali by Srila Raghunâth dâs Goswâmi, Prârthanâ and *Prem*-Bhakti-Chandrikâ by Srila Narottam dâs Thâkur *Mahâ*shay.

37.We should relish *Mahâprasâdam* –

It is the food-offering we make to Sri Krishna with love and devotion accompanied by *mantra*s. What food should we offer to Sri Krishna? All that is pure, pleasing, fit for human consumption and nutritious. A devotee should always accept only *Mahâprasâdam*. We must never ever accept what is not *Mahâprasâdam*. It is divine; when we take it, we are rid of material tendencies and ultimately we gain *prem* and *bhakti.*

In fact we should never accept food, water or medicine without offering to Sri Krishna. Accepting unoffered food is detrimental for a Vaishnav.

We may think that refusing *Mahâprasâdam* or neglecting it is a sign of material detachment. That is, it shows we have overcome sense-gratification. However it only shows *Phalgu-vairâgya*[3]*.* When we do not beg for *Mahâprasâdam* (say, when we see someone distributing it) it indicates false-pride. After getting *Mahâprasâdam* if we neglect it or disregard it, it is an *aparâdh*. We should never make *mahâprasâd* wait, for 'Prasâd Prabhu' is non-different from Govinda. It is better we accept *Mahâprasâdam* eagerly. In fact we should be interested in accepting anything pertaining to Sri Krishna, for only in this manner we can truly overcome our sensual desires.

38.We should relish the *charanâmritam (*foot-wash) of Sri Hari –

"Who do not give alms, nor recite the Vedas, nor worship nor perform any sacrifice, yet drink the foot wash of Sri Hari will attain the highest realm." – (Padma Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

39.We should smell the fragrance of incense offered to Sri Krishna –

Its glory is as follows –

"We are bitten by the snake-like material desires and attachments. If we wish to rid ourselves from the poison of this snake, it is our foremost duty to smell the scent of incense offered to Sri Hari." – (Tantra quoted in B.R.S.)

This goes for Sri Hari's garland and Tulsi as well. The fragrance of flowers and Tulsi offered to Sri Bhagavân enters our nose and destroys all *anarthas*. It transmits *bhakti* in us. The sages such as Sanak were situated in the bliss of submerging in Brahman. Yet when they smelt the Tulsi offered at Sri Nârâyan's lotus feet, that fragrance crushed their *Brahmânanda* and transmitted su*preme* devotion in them. Srimad-Bhâgavatam (3.15) describes this incident.

[1] A vigorous dance of frenzy or delirium
[2] Panegyric, tribute, adulation
[3] River Phalgu in Bengal appears dry since all we can see is a sandy spread which actually is a very thin layer. However the river flows quietly underneath. If a person tries to walk on the sand, he falls into the water. Similarly a person may display detachment, yet have desire for sense gratification inside. This is 'phalgu-vairâgya'.

40.We should touch the Deity during *archanam* –

Earlier we have stated that it is compulsory for every initiated devotee to perform *archanam.* When we do *archanam* we should be physically and mentally pure and worship with faith, love and devotion.

"*sprishtvâ vishnoradhushthânam pavitrah shraddhayânvitah."*

– (Vishnu-dharmottar quoted in B.R.S.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse as follows –

"Let us learn the wonderful benefit of touching the Deity. However everyone does not have the right to touch Him. Only those who have got *dikshâ* can touch the Lord.

Skanda Purân says –

evam sri-bhagavân sarvaih shâlagrâma-shilâtmakah,

dwijaih stribhishcha shudraishcha pujyoh bhagavatah pariah

Meaning – All *bhagavat-parâyan*[1] brahmins, women and *shudras* can worship Sri *Bhagavân* Who is in the form of Shâlagrâm.

Here '*bhagavat-parâyan*' means 'those who follow the rules of *bhakti,* or the Vaishnavs[2]. It naturally follows that those who are without love for Sri *Bhagavân* have no right to touch Shâlagrâm. Hence when we read in the scriptures that women and shudras should not touch Shâlagrâm we should know that it refers to non-Vaishanv women and shudras[3]. Such statements do NOT indicate women and shudras who follow Vaishanv-etiquette and have love for Sri Vishnu (or Sri Krishna).

41.We should take *darshan* of the Deity –

When we do not get an opportunity to touch the Deity we should take His *darshan*. We get a lot of benefit from this –

"O Vasundharâ, those who go to Sri Vrindâban and take *darshan* of Sri Govindadev, do not go to the abode of Yamrâj (the Lord of death), in stead they attain the realm of pious people." – (Varâha Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

Here 'realm of pious people' definitely refers to Sri Bhagavân's abode since we can get only one blessing from the *darshan* of Govinda dev – and that is *prem.* Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse as follows –

"The author (Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd) has instructed the wonderful benefit of taking *darshan* of every worshipped Deity of Sri Bhagavân. After this, due to his immense *bhakti* he has stated the special glory of taking *darshan* of Sri Govinda dev Who is Sri *Bhagavân* in His true form. Here 'they go to the realm of pious people' means 'one attains the state of Sri Krishna-*bhakti'* for we should realize that *bhakti* is the topmost achievable goal."

42.We should take *darshan* of *ârâtrika (ârati)*[4] –

Âratrika or *ârati* as we commonly call it is a very loving affair. If we take *darshan* of the Deity during *ârati*, great sins too get destroyed and we gain very good result in our devotional life.

43.Hearing –
As soon as Sri Krishna's name, description of His beauty, qualities and associates touch our ears we call it 'hearing'. It spells the beginning of *Bhajan* and the best *bhajan*. Without hearing

[1] Those who have taken the path of bhakti, which incidentally, commences with initiation.
[2] Since Vaishnav are the ones who follow the rules of bhakti
[3] Shudras do not remain so after they have embraced Vaishnavism
[4] Offering of lamp, incense etc.

we cannot learn why we should perform *bhajan* and its glory. Especially when we hear Sri Krishna-*kathâ,* He enters our heart, destroys material desires and manifests *bhakti.* Also it is very beneficial to hear about Sri *Bhagavân* from great devotees.

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written –

"Hearing Srimad-Bhâgavatam is the topmost hearing, since the words of Srimad-Bhâgavatam have immense power. The great sage Vyâsdev has commented in the very beginning of Srimad-Bhâgavatam that, forget hearing Srimad-Bhâgavatam, if we merely wish to hear it – immediately Sri *Bhagavân* is imprisoned inside our heart. - (S.B.1.1.2) Also Srimad-Bhâgavatam is the complete summum bonum of the Vedas. The Vedas are like a wish-fulfilling tree while Srimad-Bhâgavatam is its ripened fruit. Therefore its every bite is delicious."

- (Bhakti-Sandarbha).

Here Srimad-Bhâgavatam refers not only to Srimad-Bhâgavatam, but also all the 'Rasa-granthas[1]' composed by our Goswâmis since they are in accordance with Srimad-Bhâgavatam. We are worshiping in the mood of Braja-*ras;* hence if we are fortunate enough to hear about Sri *Bhagavân* from a pure devotee who is in the same mood then it is really a great blessing. Also when we hear Sri Krishna-*kathâ* we should hear with love, faith and attention, since then only we shall gain passionate love for Sri Krishna's lotus feet. Later on we should ruminate on what we have heard.

"If we follow this rule for hearing, Sri Hari will come spontaneously and enter our heart. We do not have to make any special effort in this regard." – (Sri Shridhar Swâmi)

44.We should wait for Sri *Bhagavân*'s merciful gaze –

All our devotional efforts will be successful when the Lord gives us His bounty. Although sugarcane is sweet, we need a machine to squeeze the juice out. Similarly Sri *Bhagavân* is full of '*kripâ-ras*', yet we cannot get this *ras* without eager and enthusiastic *bhajan*. We have to work hard for it. Hence we should anxiously and constantly wait for Sri Krishna's mercy while performing *bhajan* so that it will bear fruits.

Sri Brahma glorified Sri Krishna by saying – "My Lord, when a devotee bears his share of joys and sorrows (he knows they are the results of his own deeds) and continues to perform *bhajan* with body, mind and speech, all the time simply praying 'Dear Lord, when will I get your mercy?" he naturally inherits You (the greatest treasure) just as a good son inherits his father's wealth." – (S.B.10.14.8 quoted in B.R.S.)

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained this verse as follows –

"Who has forsaken all other paths and follows only *bhakti* – he alone will gain You. Knowing this, we may question – what sort of *bhakti* should I perform? The answer is – we should perform *bhajan* with body, mind and speech while enjoying whatever life offers us – be it sorrow or joy. *Bhakti* gives happiness and *aparâdh* brings suffering. The devotee goes through these experiences and eventually considers both as Sri *Bhagavân*'s mercy. A loving father feeds his child milk as well as *Neem*[2]-juice to maintain her health. Milk is palatable while the child abhors *Neem*-juice. However the father forces the child to drink both since they are nutritious. Similarly he sometimes hugs and kisses the child and at times may even slap to correct her. A surrendered devotee feels that I do not know what is good for me, only my Lord knows best. I am His devotee, time and karma have no effect on me – it is my Lord Who takes mercy on me and gives me joy and sorrow. When a devotee firmly believes in this and serves Sri *Bhagavân* with body, mind and speech, he gets liberation from material attachments (this is secondary result) and the right to serve the Holy feet of Sri *Bhagavân* (chief outcome). If we wish to inherit our father's wealth all we have to do is – continue to live. Similarly to gain the

[1] Delectable texts

[2] ***Azadirachta indica***, syn. *Melia azadirachta* L., *Antelaea azadirachta* (L.)

treasure-like sacred feet of Sri *Bhagavân*, all we need to do is – continue in the path of *bhakti*. Therefore we should humbly live a life of *bhakti* and patiently wait for His causeless mercy.

45. Meditation – It means we should connect our mind in any manner with Sri *Bhagavân*'s name, beauty, qualities and pastimes. Remembering Sri Hari is the soul of *bhakti-sâdhanâ.* If we do not remember Him during *bhajan* it means *bhajan* is lifeless and we are just like robots.

"I seek shelter unto Sri Hari Who is without beginning and end, and Whom as soon as we remember we gain all welfare." – (Vishnu Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written in Bhakti Sandarbha –

"Sri Krishna is the universal guru. When a devotee meditates on His lotus feet, Sri Krishna appears before him and offers Himself to the devotee. It indicates that He surrenders unto the devotee on His own. Then what more can we say about the devotee's material desires[1]? Since anyway, he does not desire much."

Meditation has five stages –

- ***Smaran*** – this is the primary level. In this stage the devotee thinks of Sri Hari's name, beauty etc to a small degree.

- ***Dhâranâ*** – in this stage the devotee drags his mind away from other topics and concentrates on Sri *Bhagavân*'s beauty etc. This is an ordinary level of concentration.

- ***Dhyân*** – when the concentration is deep then we call it *'dhyân'*.

- ***Dhruvânusmritu*** – in this level the remembrance is continuous like the flow of oil – the mind does not wander.

- ***Samâdhi*** – in this stage the devotee experiences *'sphurti'* (spontaneous revelation).

Hearing, glorifying and remembrance are intermingled with each other. We cannot tell when one will lead to another. We may be hearing or chanting the Holy Name, and suddenly it absorbs us in His remembrance! Therefore chanting the Holy Name and meditation are often inseparable and one leads to the other. We shall discuss this in detail in 'A scientific Study of Râgânugâ-Bhakti.'

46. ***Dhyân***[2] – *'Dhyân'* is the most important part of *bhajan* since no *bhajan* is fruitful unless and until we perform it with deep concentration. Therefore Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has given it as a special point.

'Dhyân' means 'extremely deep concentration'. It is the soul of devotional practice. Its outcome is extremely marvelous. Whatever we do, whether we hear, take the Holy Name, sing glorification, do *archanam* or for that matter any sevâ, we have to do it with *dhyân*. We find in Srimad-Bhâgavatam –

"Sri Avadhut Gitâ describes the inconceivable effect of *dhyân*. When a living being fixes its mind on anything – be it out of fear, love or envy – it attains the state of the 'object of meditation'. Let us explain with an example – Srimad-Bhâgavatam mentions that there there is an insect that catches another smaller insect and imprisons it in its nest. The tiny insect is in constant fear of the bigger insect and hence constantly thinks about it. Therefore it starts looking like the insect even before leaving its body. This signifies that we can get a similar body like that of our 'object of meditation'. Then do we have any

[1] They are sure to melt away
[2] The third level of meditation or very deep concentration

doubt that if we meditate on *sac-chidânanda* Sri *Bhagavân*, we too shall gain a *sac-chidânanda* form?" – (S.B.11.9.22-23)

Dhyân is of four types –

- ***Rupa[1]-dhyân*** – The scriptures have declared that if we meditate on Sri Krishna's lotus feet all our sorrows will be alleviated. Sri Krishna has 19 symbols on His soles – such as flag, thunderbolt, elephant-goad etc. Each symbol is capable of destroying *anartha*s that cause obstacles on the path of *bhakti.* It also has immense power to offer *prem* to the meditator.

  Sri Krishna has infinite beauty and sweetness. When we meditate on His form it attracts our mind like a pitcher of honey drags a honey bee – so much so – that we naturally give up thinking about objects other than Sri Krishna.

- ***Guna[2]-dhyân*** – Sri Krishna has excellent and sweet qualities such as love for His devotees, compassion etc. If a devotee meditates on these qualities constantly with devotion even colossal amount of anarthas get destroyed and he attains the abode of Sri Hari.

- ***Leelâ-dhyân*** – Sri Krishna is heart-stealing and His pastimes are even more tempting. They are the essence of all sweetness. If we meditate on them we shall immerse in sweet *ras*.[3]

- ***Sevâ[4]-dhyân*** – to serve '*manomayee*[5]' Deity in meditation.

  "Certain devotees have served Sri Hari continually in their mind and have actually got his *darshan* although He is beyond all conception." – (Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

  Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this point further by quoting an incident from Sri Brahma-Vaivarta Purân –

  "There lived a simple and poor brahmin in Pratishthânpur (present day Paithân in Maharashtra). He was extremely eager to serve Sri *Bhagavân*. However due to poverty he was unable to buy the ingredients necessary for pujâ. One day he attended an assembly of *Vaishnavs* to hear Bhagavad-*kathâ*. There he heard that if someone is unable to get the items needed for external *seva*, he can manifest the Deity in his mind and can simply worship Him with all the paraphernalia mentally. When the Brahmin heard this he was delighted. He decided that he would worship his *manomayee* Deity everyday. One day, after bathing in the Godâvari, he sat in a secluded place. In his mind he built a nice temple for Sri Hari, installed *manomayee* Deity, worshiped Him with royal ingredients and he felt supreme happiness. He continued to worship in this manner everyday. On one occasion he decided to offer *paramânna*[6] with ghee to the Deity. So he cooked it in his mind, poured it in a gold vessel and started fanning to cool it. After sometime, he mentally dipped his finger in it to check whether it had cooled or not. His finger got burnt. He felt sorry that now the *paramânna* had become unfit for Sri *Bhagavân*'s sevâ. His *samâdhi*[7] broke. He saw that his finger had really got burnt and he could feel the pain. When Sri Hari saw His bewildered devotee, He smiled, called for a vehicle and brought His devotee to Him."

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[1] beauty
[2] excellence
[3] We have discussed *leelâ-dhyân* in detail in 'A Scientific Study of Raganugâ *bhajan*'.
[4] Loving service
[5] When a form of Sri *Bhagavân* manifests in our mind (*man)* and we worship Him mentally, such a Deity is called *'manomayee'*.
[6] Rice cooked in milk and sugar
[7] The highest level of meditation

47. ***Dâsya***[1] – When we serve thinking "I am Sri Krishna's servant" such a mood is called *'dâsya'.*

"When we are engrossed in the mood that "I am Sri Krishna's servant" we get so much bliss – it is like an ocean – and even millions of Brahmânanda cannot equal a drop of this ocean."
– (C.C.Antya.6.44.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written –

"Forget doing *paricharyâ*, if we are simply engrossed in the mood of a servant we shall attain success, that is, gain *prem-bhakti*." – (B.S.304)

He has quoted evidence *Itihâs* to prove his point –

"janmântar sahasreshu yasya syânmatireedrishi,
dâso'ham vâsudevasya sarvân lokân samuddharet."

Meaning - "After gathering the good fortune over thousands of births someone gets the feeling 'I am Vâsudev's servant' - such a person can deliver the entire world."

What is *'dâsya'?*

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained it as follows – "*'Dâsya'* means to pay obeisance, glorify, surrender all our activities to Him, do *paricharyâ,* remember His holy feet and hear about Him. Sri Hari's servants always accomplish all *sâdhanâ* and achieve their goal – they never fail in anything. Srimad-Bhâgavatam says –

Sri *Bhagavân*'s Name is so exalted that simply by hearing it once man gets purified. Then how great is His servant? Forget attaining complete success in *bhajan*, there is nothing he cannot achieve. – (S.B.9.5.16.)"

We, the Goudiya *Vaishnavs* are proud to consider ourselves Srimati Râdhârâni's maidservants and worship the Divine couple in this mood. We shall discuss this in detail in 'A Scientific study of *Râgânugâ Bhajan*'.

48. ***Sakhya*** – It means to have faith and treat one another with friendly love. We should have faith in Sri Krishna and be friends with Him. We can express our *sakhya*-mood by endeavoring for His welfare and happiness. Some great devotees have such friendly and loving *bhâv* towards Sri Krishna that they sleep inside the temple to guard Him.

Sakhya-bhâv is not only a goal, but also a *sâdhanâ* since we can gain *prem* by practicing this mood. Sri *Bhagavân* is everybody's friend, yet He has special love for His devotees. The devotees too always wish Him well. This loving relation between Sri *Bhagavân* and His devotees is unbroken. Therefore when we practice being friendly with Him, our natural love for Him blooms further.

49. **Self-surrender** - This means we should surrender everything to Sri *Bhagavân* – body, soul and everything we possess. When we surrender, it indicates that we do not try anything for ourselves. We leave our goal and *sâdhanâ* to Him – He will take care of my goal and also to my *sâdhanâ* – this is the feeling. We will only take great care of Him and He will see to the rest. This is self-surrender. It is like selling your cow. Suppose you possess a cow. Till you own it you are bound to worry about its food, health etc. But once you sell the cow you need not worry anymore; now let the man who has bought the cow take the trouble. Similarly as long as we are proud and think this body to be 'I' and material possessions to be 'mine' we have to worry about their maintenance. Once we have sought refuge in the path of *bhakti* and we have surrendered unto Sri Krishna's lotus feet we need not be anxious for ourselves or our possessions (relations) any more.

[1] *Dâs* = servant; *dâsya* = the mood of servitude.

Our minds should just be deeply absorbed in Him and perform His *bhajan* - free of stress. Then we shall be blessed.

"When we seek refuge of Sri Krishna and self-surrender unto Him, He immediately makes us His own." – (C.C.Madhya.22.54.)

50. **We should offer Sri Krishna what is dear to us** – "When an object is permitted by the scriptures, it is lavish **and** it is also our favorite – and we offer such an object to Sri Krishna then the outcome is immeasurable."- (S.B.11.11.41. quoted in B.R.S.)

Here 'favorite object' refers to those items permitted by the scriptures since an object forbidden by the scriptures can never be a devotee's favorite. In the above statement 'and' indicates Sri *Bhagavân*'s favorite as well. When we offer such items we get immense results.

51. All our endeavors should be directed towards Sri Krishna - A devotee labors only to please Sri Krishna.

"O sage, who wishes to gain *bhakti* should direct all his activities – be it worldly or spiritual – to serve Sri Hari alone." – (Pancharâtra quoted in B.R.S.)

If we are following the path of pure devotion we should not offer our activity to Sri Krishna after performing it, rather before doing anything we should question ourselves whether it is for Sri Krishna's pleasure or not? If it is, then we perform that deed – this is *seva.* Then it is worthwhile.

52. *Sharanâgati*[1] – Taking refuge is the main pillar of devotional practice. Our progress in *bhakti* is directly proportional to our *sharanâgati*. We should seek the refuge of Sri Krishna with body, mind and speech.

"The devotee who says – 'My dear Lord, I am only Yours', knows the same in his mind (he really feels he belongs to Sri Krishna) and physically lives in his *dhâm*, he has indeed taken refuge and enjoys happiness." – (B.R.S.)

There are 6 rules of *Sharanâgati*–

ânukulyasya samkalpah prâtikulya-vivârjanam,
rakshishyatiti vishwâso goptritve varanam tahtâ.
âtma-nikshepa-kârpanye shada-vidhâ sharanâgatih.

Meaning –

- Determined to do all that is favorable for *bhakti*
- Reject everything that is unfavorable for *bhakti*
- A firm faith that "Sri *Bhagavân* will protect me"
- To feel that "Sri *Bhagavân* is my sole maintainer"
- Self-surrender
- Pray with humility

Amongst these "Sri *Bhagavân* is my husband or sole maintainer" is the main point, other rules follow suit. ***Sharanâgati* is wonderful and without this we can not say we belong to Sri Krishna**. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has said –

"Our *bhajan* processes become successful when we adopt *sharanâgat*i."– (B.S.237.)

[1] refuge

53. **We should serve Sri Krishna's dear ones** –

"'Sri Krishna's dear ones' refers to *Tulsi, Vaishnav, Brajamandal* and Srimad-Bhâgavatam; we should serve them." – (C.C.Madhya.22.71.)

Let us discuss the importance of these *seva* in detail.

54. **We should serve the *bhakti*-scriptures such as Srimad-Bhâgavatam** –

"Even the *devatâs* worship those who adore *Vaishnav*-scriptures. They are liberated from all sins. When we keep *Vaishnav*-scriptures in our home, Sri Nârâyan resides there." – (Skanda Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

The Vedas are like a wish-fulfilling tree and Srimad-Bhâgavatam is its ripe fruit (it is the essence of the Vedas). Therefore it is the original *Vaishnav*-scripture. When we develop a passion for the sweet *ras* of Srimad-Bhâgavatam we do not feel interest in other books. Our preceptors – the Goswâmis of Vrindâban – have composed many texts following the dictum of Srimad-Bhâgavatam. They are Brihad-Bhâgavatam, Laghu-Bhâgavatâmtitam, *Bhakti*-Rasâmrita-Sindhu, Gopâl-Champuh, Ânanda-Vrindâbana-Champuh etc. They are also 'Bhâgavat'. When we read, hear and worship these texts, we are serving Srimad-Bhâgavatam.

55. **We should serve *Braja-mandal*** (also called Mathura-*mandal)* – We should hear the glory of *Braja-dhâm* where Sri Krishna has manifested His sweet pastimes. We should visit *Braja-dhâm*, take *darshan,* touch the earth of that place, reside there, sweep and wash the place. Then we shall achieve our goal easily.

"Who forsakes *Braja-dhâm*, develops attachment for another Holy place and resides there, he is a fool. He has fallen in the grip of *mâyâ* and will wander in the cycle of birth and death." – (Âdi-Varâha Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

"Even if we serve all the Holy places in the three worlds, we cannot get supreme bliss (or *prem* – the topmost achievable goal); however it becomes easily available simply if we touch *Braja-dhâm*." – (Brahmânda Purân)

56. We should serve the *Vaishnavs* – We can please the *Vaishnavs* in two ways

- By arranging Sri Hari-kathâ and Sri Harinâm
- By doing *paricharyâ* such as offering *Mahâprasâdam,* massaging the feet etc.

Sri Krishna has told Uddhav –

"*Vaishnav-sevâ* is more pleasing to me than my own *seva*."- (S.B.11.19.21)

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained this statement as follows –

"I am more pleased when you serve my devotees; therefore you should serve the devotees."

Sriman-*Mahâ*dev has told the Mother Goddess –

"Worshiping Sri Vishnu is greater than all adoration. Worshiping the *Vaishnavs* is greater than that. Sri *Bhagavân* is easily pleased when we serve the *Vaishnavs*." – (Padma Purân)

The Lord Himself has stated –

"Dear *Pârtha* (Arjun), who claim to be my devotees are not really so, but those who love and serve my devotees are my devotees in truth." – (Âdi Purân)

"O sage, when we serve great devotees such as you, we get the immense joy of extremely deep love for the lotus feet of Lord Madhusudan." – (S.B.3.7.19.)

This proves that if we want Sri *Bhagavân*'s mercy we should diligently serve the *Vaishnavs.*

57. **We should arrange grand feasts to the maximum extent we can afford -** A grand feast is a happy event in which there is a lot of *Harinâm-sankirtan* and *Vaishnavs* are fed *Mahâprasâdam.* The saints glorify such feasts. We should procure objects according to what we can afford and hold such feasts for the *Vaishnavs*. A householder who has the funds yet does not arrange such feasts fall under the category 'monetary fraud'. A grand feast achieves two targets – spreading the Holy Name and *Vaishnav-sevâ.*

58. **We should observe *Niyam Sevâ vrata* in the month of *Kârtik*** - The month of *Kârtik* is more important than other months. We should keep some *Niyam*[1] during this month to read, hear, glorify and serve Sri Sri Râdhâ-Dâmodarjiu with special love and care. In this period, even a small amount of *bhajan* gives Sri Râdhâ-Dâmodar more pleasure. Whatever *bhajan* we may perform, the outcome is much more as compared to the same *bhajan* performed in other months.

If we reside in *Braja-dhâm* during *Kârtik* and observe *Niyam Sevâ*, all of a sudden we get Sri Hari-*bhakti* that is otherwise extremely difficult to gain.

"*bhuktim muktim harirdadyâdarchito'nyatra sevinâm,*
bhaktintu na dadâtyeva yato vashyâkri hare.
sâ twanjasâ harerbhaktirlabhate kârtike naraih,
mathurâyâm sakridapi Sri-dâmodara-sevanât."
– (Padma Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained the above statement as follows –

"When a devotee who is devoid of deep love and unqualified, worship Sri Krishna in any place other than *Braja-mandal*, He grants him material pleasures and liberation, but does not give him *bhakti*, that will make Him subjugated to the devotee. Sri Krishna grants *bhakti* only to a devotee who has deep love for Him, and to no one else. If a devotee does not have deep love for Sri Krishna, he is unqualified for *bhakti*. This is because He does not think it is right for Him to surrender to one who does not have deep love for Him. So He waits for the devotee to become qualified. What is that qualification? The devotee should realize that his welfare lies in *bhakti* alone, and he should become disinterested in everything else. However, if we reside in *Braja-mandal* even once and perform *Niyam-sevâ* and worship Sri Sri Râdhâ-Dâmodarjiu, then all of a sudden we can get Sri Hari-*bhakti*, in spite of being unqualified. This happens although Sri Hari-*bhakti* is extremely difficult to obtain."

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has added –

"If we serve the Dâmodar month (= observe *Niyam-seva)* in *Braja-mandal*, in spite of not having performed any *sâdhanâ*, all of a sudden we get *bhakti*."

59. **We should celebrate *Vaishnav* festivals** – Appearance days of Sri Krishna, Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu and divine *avatârs* are joyous occasions. We should observe fasts on these days and blissfully indulge in Sri Harinâm. After hearing Sri *Bhagavân*'s sweet pastimes and qualities we should glorify them. On the next day we can have a *Mahâ-mahotsav* (more than a grand feast) for the *Vaishnavs*. Sri *Bhagavân* is pleased with such celebration and if we do not take part in it, it is an offence.

60. **We should take pleasure in serving the lotus feet of the Deity** –

"Who takes my name constantly and is always happy to serve me – I grant him *bhakti*, and not liberation." – (Âdi Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

"*bigraha noho tumi sâkkhât brajendranandan"*

[1] vow

Meaning - "You are not a Deity but the Son of Nanda *Mahâ*râj in real form." – (C.C.)

When we feel like this, then our *sevâ* naturally becomes loving. The best worshipers are those who serve the Deity in this mood.

61. **We should relish the meaning of Srimad-Bhâgavatam in the association of *rasik* pure devotees** – In the very beginning Srimad-Bhâgavatam lovingly invites the *rasik* and pure devotees to relish the highly delectable fruit of the Vedas which are like wish-fulfilling tree.[1]

"Dear connoisseurs of *ras*, dear *bhâvukas* (those who are expert in *ras*-realization), Srimad-Bhâgavatam is a transcendental drink that is devoid of any adulteration. The Vedas are like the wish-fulfilling tree and Srimad-Bhâgavatam is the extremely ripened fruit of this tree. It is flowing out of the Holy lips pf Sri Shuka and has revealed itself to this world on its own (since eternity). Although you are in the state of self-realization, please drink repeatedly of this marvelous *ras*." – (S.B.1.1.3)

The sweetness of Sri *Bhagavân's leelâ-ras* is much more remarkable than the bliss of merging with the Brahman. Shuka Muni was absorbed in the Brahman-realization which has no characteristic whatsoever. However when he heard Srimad-Bhâgavatam he was highly attracted by its *ras*. He came to Vyâsdev and studied Srimad-Bhâgavatam. He has admitted to Parikshit *Mahârâj* –

"O *Râjarshi*[2], I was immersed in Brahman-realization which is devoid of any characteristic. Yet Sri Krishna's divine pastimes are so sweet that they dragged me to my father and I studied Srimad-Bhâgavatam under him." – (S.B.2.1.9.)

To relish the *ras* of Srimad-Bhâgavatam in the company of *rasik* devotees is an intimate part of *bhajan*.

62. **Association of pure devotees** – A pure devotee is one who has *Vaishnav*-etiquette and is firm in Bhakti. We call him a *'sâdhu'*. His association is always desirable. We wish ourselves well when we associate with a *sâdhu* who is *samavâsan*[3]*.* He should be of a serene disposition and situated on a higher plane of *bhakti* than we are.

"All scriptures repeatedly exhort us to associate with *sâdhus;* even momentary association with a *sâdhu* can enable us to achieve our goal." – (C.C.Madhya.22.33.)

"Even a very short association with a *sâdhu* can grant such incredible fruits that the heaven and *apavarga* cannot give us. It is needless to say that material kingdom and wealth that is highly destructible is nowhere near it." – (S.B.1.18.13)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has stated that we have this effect when we associate with *savâsan sâdhus* only.

Sri *Bhagavân*'s bounties engulf us when we associate with *sâdhus* and get their *kripâ*. We cannot get His mercy by independent endeavors. Of course, Sri *Bhagavân*'s mercy is compulsory to get *bhakti*, however we should know that His mercy comes to us in the form of a *sâdhu*. It is foolish if we ignore the mercy that has assumed a form[4] and in stead keep searching for second-grade mercy (directly Sri *Bhagavân*'s mercy).

[1] The Vedas are like the wish-fulfilling tree and Srimad-Bhâgavatam is the essence of all Vedic scriptures. Hence it is like the ripened fruit of this tree.
[2] A king who is also a sage
[3] With the same mood. For example, since we are practicing *bhajan* in the mood of a Manjari, we should desire the company of a *sâdhu* who has the same mood (that is, of a Manjari).
[4] Mercy has come to us in the form of a *sâdhu*

Association of a *sâdhu* and serving him does not mean simply going to a *sâdhu,* living with him and feeding him *prasâdam*; we will know that we have really done *sâdhu-sanga* when we hear Sri Krishna-*kathâ* from them, meditate on their words, follow their instructions and practice devotion according to their advice.[1]

63. **Sri Harinâm-sankirtan** – This is the best *bhajan*. Srimad-Bhâgavatam says -

> "*na hyatah paramolâhbo dehinâm bhrâmyatâmiha,*
> yato vindeta paramâm shântim nasyeta samsritih*."*

Meaning - "The living beings are wandering in various forms of life – they do not benefit more from anything else other than the interest in Sri Harinâm-*sankirtan*."

Therefore we should have interest in hearing and/or chanting the Holy Name. The main outcome is love for the lotus feet of Sri *Bhagavân* and its secondary outcome is the destruction of material desires. It results in su*preme* peace.

"Harinâm appears constantly only in the mouth of one who has served Sri Vâsudev for thousands of life-times." – (Padma Purân quoted in B.R.S.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this statement as follows –

"A devotee who is firm in serving Sri Vâsudev goes through rebirths repeatedly only because Sri *Bhagavân* wishes to increase his eagerness and enthusiasm for *bhakti*."

"Sri Harinâm *Sankirtan* results in the destruction of sin and material desires; it cleanses the sub-conscious mind. It is the source of all other *bhakti-sâdhanâs* that results in Sri Krishna-*prem*. It also enables us to relish this nectarine *prem.* It makes Sri Krishna available to us and submerges us in the nectarine ocean of *sevâ*." – (C.C.Antya.20.10-11.)

64. **We should reside in *Braja-mandal*** – This is an intimate part of *bhajan*. Even the liberated souls crave for Sri Hari-*bhakti* - and we can get it simply by residing here for one day. To get the real benefit of residing in *Brajadhâm* we should constantly hear the loving sweet pastimes of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna. If we stay here lovingly then all of a sudden we shall get *bhâv* and *bhakti*. When an inoffensive person merely touches *Brajadhâm* he gets *bhakti.* This is because by Sri Krishna's wish, *prem-dhâm*[2] Sri Golok-Vrindâban that is the highest point in the divine realm, has expressed itself on planet earth.

The highest point in the divine world is Sri Golok-Brajalok *dhâm*. It is also called Sri Golok, Shwetadweep and Vrindâban. It is conscious, all-knowing, infinite, almighty and non-different from Sri Krishna's body. It pervades all quarters – has no limit. By Sri Krishna's wish it has appeared in this universe. It exists in the same form as in the divine world. In other words, it is not in two different forms." – (C.C.Âdi.5.17-19)

Although Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has mentioned the five points, namely, serving the Deity, Srimad-Bhâgavatam, devotee, Harinâm and Braja-dhâm – he repeats them to emphasize their importance and power. Forget honoring them, if we merely come in touch with them, and we are inoffensive, it will awaken *bhâv* in us all of a sudden.

"The association of *sâdhus*, Harinâm-*sankirtan*, hearing of Srimad-Bhâgavatam, residing in *Braja-mandal* and faithfully serving the Deities are the most important parts of *bhajan*. If we perform even little of these we can get Sri Krishna-*prem*." – (C.C.Madhya.22.74-75)

Gradual Progress in *Bhakti*

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has chalked out how we progress gradually in *Bhakti*, reach the state of *bhâv* and ultimately *prem* –

[1] Please read the 'Glory of associating with a devotee' in 'A Scientific study of the devotee'.
[2] The abode of transcendental love

âdou shraddhâ tatah sâdhu-sango'tha bhajanakriya,
tato'nartha-nivtrittih syât-tato nishthâ ruchis-tatah.
athâsaktis-tato bhâvas-tatah premâbhyudanchati,
sâdhakânâmayam premnah prâdurbhâve bhavet kramah."

Meaning - "In the beginning we should acquire *shraddhâ* by hearing the scriptures in the company of *sâdhus*, then we should learn the process of *bhajan* by further association with them, after this starts actual practice of *bhajan* followed by *anartha-nivritti* (getting rid of bad qualities), *nishthâ* (firm determination in *bhajan*), *ruchi (*interest in *bhajan*), *âsakti* (deep attachment for *bhajan*), *bhâv* and ultimately *prem*. This is the usual process by which *prem* manifests in a *sâdhak."*

Best *bhakti* – *Bhakti* has two aspects – *sâdhya* - 'achievable goal' and 'Process'. We can classify *bhakti* into –

- ***Sâdhan-bhakti*** – when we are in the stages from *shraddhâ* to *bhakti* we are said to perform *sâdhan-bhakti.* It comprises of hearing, glorifying and remembering.
- ***Bhâv-bhakti*** – When our heart is cleansed by the above process, we reach the stage of *bhâv*.
- ***Prem-bhakti*** – when we gain *prem.*

We should remember that *bhakti* is a property of Sri *Bhagavân*'s *swarup-shakti* (internal potency) and although it is transcendental it becomes one with our senses and manifests itself on its own.

"nitya-siddha krishna-prem sâdhya kobhu noy,
shrabanâdi shuddha chitte koroye udoy."

Meaning - "Sri Krishna-*prem* is eternal and self-manifested. We can never achieve it by any process. When we hear, glorify and follow the paths of *bhajan*, our heart becomes clean and it reveals itself." - (C.C.Madhya.22.57.)

Now let us study the different stages in *bhakti*.

1. ***Shraddhâ*** – it means to hear the scriptures from the pure devotees and believe in the *shâstras. "âdou shraddhâ" - shradhhâ* is the first step of *bhajan* and the root of all devotional practice. Only when a person has *shradhhâ* he can gain knowledge about *bhakti*. We have already discussed in brief the characteristics of scriptural faith. The one who has such faith alone is qualified for *bhajan*. When *shradhhâ* arises in us, we cannot remain disinterested in *bhajan* anymore – we will surely set forth in the path of *bhakti*. When we gain scriptural faith we become agitated and start searching for a *Sadguru* so that we may seek refuge at his holy feet. At last, by the mercy of Sri Krishna we get the shelter of Sri Gurudev. This is *sâdhu-sanga* - the next step in the ladder of *bhakti*.
2. ***Sâdhu-sanga*** – The first time we do *sâdhu-sanga* is when we hear the scriptures from the *sâdhus* and the second *sâdhu-sanga* occurs when we crave for *bhajan* and are eager to take the shelter of Sri Gurudev's feet. Here *sâdhu* means those who have surrendered themselves at the lotus feet of Sri *Bhagavân*, they love Him and consider loving Him as the su*preme* goal of their life.

What is '*sâdhu-sanga'*?

'*sanga'* means serving the *sâdhu,* doing his *paricharyâ,* hearing Sri Krishna-*kathâ* from him, behaving as they behave, glorifying them – and be engrossed in serving them with body, speech and mind – this is *sâdhu-sanga.* Then amongst these *sâdhus* we may meet someone whose shelter we sincerely desire; he becomes our Sri Gurudev. We should take *dikshâ* and *shikshâ* from him.

3. ***bhajan-kriyâ*** – or the actual process of *bhajan* – Now we start hearing, glorifying, *archanam, vandandam* etc. *bhajan-kriyâ* is of two types –

   - not firm
   - firm

   In the beginning stages our *bhajan* is not firm. We have to cross a few hurdles before our *bhajan* becomes firm. When a devotee who has *shraddhâ* takes initiation from a *Sadguru,* and by his mercy starts *bhajan*, he is highly enthusiastic. He is always eager to practice *sâdhanâ*. So we call this stage as *utsâhamayi* or 'enthusiastic'.

   However this state does not remain long. Within a short time we find our eagerness webbing. We feel bored and our *bhajan* suffers a 'low tide'. Sometimes our *bhajan* is intense and at other times it is slack. Therefore the wise call this state as 'intense-slack' period. during this time we get many ideas, such as – I shall leave my family and practice *bhajan* in seclusion or I will practice *bhajan* as a householder or out of hearing, glorifying etc. (nine types of *bhakti*) I will practice only one or I will practice all of them etc. etc. Therefore we also call this state as *vyudha-vikalpâ* or '**alternate ideas'**.

   In this stage we have to literally fight with our materialistic tendencies. Sometimes we win and at other times material desires get the better of us. Since this continues, we call it the *vishay-sangarâ* or '**material association'** state.

   Devotional practice should force our material desires to wane and increase love for *bhajan*. However if it does not happen we should realize that it is because we are not following the rules of *bhajan* properly (as given by Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd). Therefore we also call this state as *niyamâkshamâ* – '**unable to follow rules'**.

   When we practice *bhajan,* sometimes people are drawn to us; then temptations such as monetary gain, power and position appear on our path. These are the parasitic creepers growing on the *Bhakti-kalpa-latâ* (*bhakti* is like a divine creeper that can fulfill all the wishes of a devotee). Therefore it is our duty to sever them first.

4. ***Anartha-nivritti*** – getting rid of bad qualities – When we are not firm in *bhajan*, our *anarthas* force us to slip down the ladder of *bhakti*. *Anarthas* are of four types –

   - **Those arising from sinful actions** – these *anarthas* arise from past and recent sinful activities.
   - **Those arising of pious actions** – the pious activities we have performed in the past grant us a rich lifestyle. This absorbs us in sense-gratification and causes *anarthas.*

- **Those arising from *aparâdhs***- Offenses against the Holy Name and *sevâ-aparâdhs* result in *anarthas.*
- **Those arising from *bhakti*** – When we advance in *bhakti* we may get money, fame and power. They give rise to *anarthas.* Thus *bhakti* too can cause bad qualities.

What are the external symptoms that tell us we have got rid of *anarthas*?

When we lack the following –

- ***Laya*** – we feel sleepy while chanting the *Mahâmantra*, hearing and meditating. In fact sleepy while doing *jap,* more sleepy during hearing and the sleepiest while meditating. This characteristic is called '*laya'*.
- ***Vikshep*** - *when* we conduct worldly matters during hearing, glorifying etc. we call it '*vikshep'*.
- ***Apratipatti*** - *even* though we may lack *laya* and *vikshep*, sometimes we do not feel like hearing or glorifying – this is '*apratipatti'.*
- ***Kashâya*** – While doing *bhajan* such as hearing etc. if we get negative feelings such as anger, greed, pride – it is called '*kashâya'*.
- ***Rasâswâd*** – if we are unable to concentrate on hearing etc. because our mind is dwelling on material pleasures or attachments, it is called '*rasâswâd'.*

We should not get overwhelmed by *anarthas* and in stead we should perform *bhajan* in the company of *sâdhus.* Also we should be very careful not to criticize pure devotees and be humble in any situation. Then by Sri *Bhagavân*'s mercy, all our *anarthas* will be destroyed and we shall enter the next stage, that is - 'firm *bhajan*'.

5. ***Nishthâ*** – This is the stage of firm *bhajan*.

"How do we decide whether our *bhajan* is 'not firm' or 'firm'? When we are lax in hearing, glorifying etc. we are not firm, and when we are strong in these activities we are 'firm'." – (Mâdhurya-Kâdambini, 4th shower)

When we become devoid of the five symptoms of *anarthas* as mentioned above, then we can say we have become 'firm in *bhajan*' or we have gained '*nishthâ'.*

6. ***ruchi* (interest)** – When we relish the sweetness of Sri Krishna's name, beauty, qualities , pastimes and associates we have reached the state of '*ruchi'.* It is of two types –
   - **<u>Depending on the subject</u>** – suppose we are hearing a *kirtan* and we relish its sweetness because it has a sweet tune, proper music, rhythm etc. it indicates we are in the first stage of interest. It is similar to a person who has little hunger and wishes for delicious meal to satisfy himself.
   - **<u>Independent of the subject</u>** – This stage is like one who is ravenously hungry. He will eat with pleasure whatever you offer him. Similarly when we develop a higher level of interest we shall relish a *kirtan* even if it does not have a sweet tune or correct rhythm. What simply matters that it contains Sri *Bhagavân*'s name, and qualities. We feel immensely overjoyed just to hear about Him. After this we step into the next stage that is *âsakti.*

7. *âsakt*i (deep attachment or addiction)–

"When our *ruchi* (interest) in *bhajan* becomes extremely intense and our thoughts keep roaming around Sri *Bhagavân* alone, then this stage is called '*âsakti'*. The process of *bhajan* is like a gracious wish-fulfilling creeper on which *âsakti* blooms like a cluster of buds that burst into the colorful flowers of *bhâv* (*âsakt*i gives rise to *bhâv*) that finally turns into *prem* (the fruit)." (M.K.6th shower)

Âsakti cleanses our *chitta* so much that it shines like a mirror. It reflects Sri *Bhagavân* so clearly as if we are actually seeing Him. Earlier, by chance our heart would get torn away from Sri *Bhagavân*, we would voluntarily connect it to Him again – but not when we have reached *âsakt*i. Now our mind is automatically absorbed in Him. The *Mahâjans* have termed this state as *dhruvânusmriti* (constant remembrance). How a poor man suffering in drought will be attracted by a plate of delicious food and how a honey bee is dragged by the scent of honey – like that, when we attain *âsakti,* our *chitta* becomes addicted to Sri *Bhagavân* and His name, qualities and *leelas*. This is the pinnacle of *sâdhan-bhakti.* After this we enter the realm of *bhâv-bhakti.*

8. ***Bhâv* or *rati*** – *Bhakti* is like a wish-fulfilling creeper and *bhâv* or *rati* is its flower. It is so fragrant that it pierces the envelope of the universe, pervades all divine abodes and drags *Bhagavân* Madhusudan to the devotee. When *âsakti* becomes extremely intense we gain *rati* (divine passion). When we gain *rati*, we see Sri *Bhagavân* in *sphurt*i as if we are actually seeing Him. We can experience His wonderful words, touch, beauty, *ras* and fragrance. In this state we become one with our *siddha swarup* - we identify only with our spiritual body. We live as if we are completely different from the material body and we are existing outside this *sâdhak*-body. Like a greedy honey bee all set to get intoxicated, our heart too becomes eager to drink the sweet nectar of His lotus feet.

"Nine symptoms of *bhâv-bhakti* are as follows-

1) Although from material point of view we should get agitated but we do not.
2) We do not waste a single second in anything not relevant to Sri *Bhagavân*
3) Disinterest in any topic that is 'other than Sri Krishna'
4) Devoid of false ego
5) Firm faith that Sri *Bhagavân* will certainly have mercy on me
6) Great eagerness to attain His lotus feet
7) Always interested in singing Harinâm
8) Forever desiring to glorify Sri *Bhagavân's* Holy Name, excellences etc.
9) Extremely enthusiastic to reside in holy places such as *Brajadhâm"*

– (B.R.S.13.25-26)

Bhâv-bhakti has two characteristics –

- The devotee considers liberation as nothing
- *Bhâv-bhakti* is extremely rare

9. ***Prem*** – It is the highest stage of *bhakti*. When *prem* arises our heart is completely clean. The devotee very much feels "Sri *Bhagavân* belongs to me." *Prem* has two characteristics –

- Intense bliss
- Attracts Sri Krishna

"*Prem* is the most precious treasure and is the fifth *purushârtha*[1] of the living entity. It gives us the sweet relish of Sri Krishna. *Prem* makes Sri Krishna come under the control of the devotee and gives him the immense joy of serving Sri Krishna." – (C.C.Âdi.7.144-145)[2]

[1] Goal of life
[2] We shall elaborate *prem* in 'A Scientific Study of *Prem*'

Sri Naam-Tattva-Vigyaan

(A Scientific Study of the Holy Name)

What is '*nâm*' (Name)?

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written in Sri Bhakti-Sandarbha –

"'*Nâm*' is a sound used to identify certain object."

Shabda-Kalpa-Droom (a Sanskrit dictionary) says –

"Sound is of two types –

- That which cannot be pronounced (just as a thunder or rustling of leaves)
- That which can be pronounced"

Of course, a name is something we can pronounce. Whenever we want to talk about an object we say its name. For example a thirsty person says "Please give me water". Immediately we think of a liquid substance that quenches thirst. In this manner every person, object, concept or idea has a name that distinguishes it from others.

"*Nâmi"* is the object (e.g. the object 'water') to which the name belongs. *'Nâm'* is simply the word (e.g. 'water' in English), while '*nâmi'* is the object itself. The only function the *nâm serves* is to denote the object – it has no quality of the object whatsoever. Had it not been so, we would have quenched our thirst simply by uttering "water" – there would have been no need to actually drink water. If *nâm* and *nâmi* would have been non-different, *nâm* would have had all the power of *nâmi.*

Shabda-Shakti-Prakâshikâ[1] says – Names are of two types –

- Man-made
- Eternal

We give names to various worldly destructible objects; they are just words and do not have any characteristic of the said objects. Such names are 'man-made'. However in the divine world there are names that have existed since eternity and will remain forever. So we call them 'eternal'.

Amongst these names, the names of God almighty are non-different from Him. They contain all His qualities. The saints and scriptures clearly state that Sri *Bhagavân* and His names are non-different – we must always remember this fact.

The Holy Name and God are non-different

There is absolutely no difference between God and His names. The Holy Name is God Himself – all the *shrutis, smritis* and the knowers of truth state this. If we are able to accept this truth then we shall realize very easily in our lives that the Holy Name is not an ordinary word that simply denotes "God".

Sri Padma Purân says –

"The Holy Name is non-different from Sri Krishna and therefore it is a wish-fulfilling gem - conscious, full of *ras*, absolute, pure, eternal and independent like Him."

The Holy Name is a wish-fulfilling gem – this means that it is capable of granting all our desires just like Sri *Bhagavân*. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse as –

"The Holy Name is a wish-fulfilling gem since it can grant all our wishes. Not only this, but like Sri Krishna it is also conscious. It is factually Sri Krishna Himself!"

– (Bhagavad Sandarbha, 48)

[1] A Sanskrit book that deals with the scientific study of words.

Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says –

"Sri Krishna's body and His self are non-different from each other and so are His Holy Names from Him. It is only the living being whose name, body and self differ from one another."

– (C.C.Madhya.17.132)

"Just as Sri *Bhagavân's* body is not different from his self, His names too are non-different from Him." – (Kurma Purân)

Our true self is transcendental while our body is material and destructible. Our names too are mundane and refer to this material body. Hence they are different from each other. This is our characteristic, not that of God. Sri *Bhagavân* and His Holy Name are only different expressions of one thing. Therefore we should understand that the Holy Name has the same power as Sri *Bhagavân.*

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written –

"The Holy Name is an expression of the Almighty just as Sri Râmchandra, Nrisimha, Matsya, Kurma and other manifestations." – (Sri Bhagavad-Sandarbha, 48)

"Sri Krishna descends in the form of the Holy Name in *Kaliyug* and delivers all universe."

– (C.C.Âdi.17.22)

Srimad-Bhâgavatam says –"Sri *Bhagavân* has innumerable incarnations."– (S.B.1.3.26)

However His Holy Name is more compassionate and has more power to redeem the fallen souls than any incarnation. Sripâd Shukamuni has said in Srimad-Bhâgavatam-

"If a dying, miserable, fallen and sinful person utters the Holy Name, that too simply under compulsion, the Holy Name delievers him from the cycle of birth and death. He attains a high state. It is sad that the people of *Kaliyug* do not worship such great Sri Hari with *Harinâm Sankirtan*!" – (S.B.12.3.44)

It is because the Holy Name is non-different from Sri *Bhagavân* Himself that if we take the Holy Name in any manner – whether during *kirtan* or hearing – even by the slight reflection of the Holy Name – if we have committed the foulest of sins – the Holy Name can redeem us and we can attain Sri *Bhagavân*. This fact is very clear from the deliverance of Ajâmil in Srimad-Bhâgavatam. The emissaries of Sri Vishnu told the messengers of Yamrâj (the Lord of death) –

"A thief, alcoholic, one who is disloyal to a friend, one who has murdered a brahmin, one who has seduced the wife of his Guru, one who has killed a woman, his king, parent or a cow, and all other sinners have only one solution – the Holy Name of Sri Nârâyan. Only the Holy Name can redeem him, since as soon as he takes the Holy Name he draws Sri *Bhagavân's* attention to him. Sri *Bhagavân* thinks, "This person belongs to me, it is my duty to protect him at all costs."

Ajâmil was a most fallen sinner. On his death-bed, when he saw the messenger of the Lord of death, he had called out his son 'Nârâyan' out of fear – he had definitely not called *Bhagavân* Sri Nârâyan. We can not call this as 'pure name' – it is simply '*nâmâbhâs*' (shadow of the Holy Name). However the Holy Name saved him and he ultimately attained Sri *Bhagavân's* abode. Not only is this true repentance, it is the best mode of repenting; for it destroys the ignorance – the very root of sin. Moreover he gains Sri *Bhagavân's* attention. The Lord feels – "He is my devotee – I should take care for him always". Thus we see that there is nothing more powerful than the Holy Name that can save a sinner. The Holy Name is also more compassionate than Sri *Bhagavân* Himself. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has written in Sri Krishna-Nâm-Ashtakam–

'Dear Holy Name, You have manifested Yourself in two forms – 'word' (the Holy Names such as 'Sri Krishna', 'Govinda' etc.) and 'all-conscious, all-blissful Sri Krishna Deity'. Of the two I know Your 'word-form' to be more compassionate, since You redeem those who have committed an offence at the lotus feet of Sri Krishna. You save him from all the offenses and immerse him in the ocean of joy, that is, he becomes engrossed in relishing the happiness of *prem."*

Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says –

"The Holy Name, the Deity and Sri Krishna Himself are one. There is no difference in them – all are conscious and blissful." – (C.C.Madhya.17.131)

This signifies that Sri *Bhagavân's* name and Deity are always non-different from Himself. Here 'Deity' refers to His image that we worship as well as to His body.

After reading the above *poyâr*[1] if anybody thinks that Sri *Bhagavân's* name, Deity and Himself are actually different, but because they are all transcendental they are said to be 'one' – then he is wrong. Sri *Bhagavân's* abode and associates are also the expressions of His majestic internal potency; then why does Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita specifically say that 'these three are one'? We should realize that they are indeed one.

Sri Hari-bhakti-Vilâs clearly proves that His Deity is non-different from Himself –

"swayam vyaktâh sthâpanâshcha murtayo dwividhâ matâh swayam vyaktâ swayam krishnah sthâpanâstu pratishthayâ."

Meaning - "Sri *Bhagavân's* Deities are of two types –

- Self-manifested
- Installed

We should know that the self-manifested Deities are Sri Krishna himself and the installed deities are 'That same Sri Krishna' from the time since they have been installed."

Sri Govindadev, Sri Gopinâth and Sri Madan-Mohan are self-manifested and they are *Swayam Bhagavân*. However such eternal Deities are very rare and we need other Deities for *archanam* – so it is necessary to install Deities. When we install Deities according to the scriptural injunctions They are actually Sri *Bhagavân* from the time since their installment. Sri Krishna has told Uddhav with His holy lips –

"The moving and non-moving – both types of forms are my temples."

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse from Sri Hari-Bhakti-Vilâs as follows –

"Here '*pratishthâ' means 'pratimâ'* (image or form*)* and '*jiva*' means 'the life of a living entity'. This means – 'it is my temple' or a place that is non-different from me. The Deity is in no way different from the parts of my body. '*Jiva-Mandir'* can also mean 'Sri *Bhagavân* - the original source of all living beings'. Those who worship Sri *Bhagavân* actually see Him in the Deity. If we harbor even the slightest notion that He is different from Sri *Bhagavân* it will be detrimental for our *bhakti*; therefore we should always perform Deity-*sevâ* considering Him to be non-different from Sri Krishna."

Srila Krishnadâs Kavirâj Goswâmi has written about the Deities of Sri Govindadev and Sri MadanMohan –

"Sri MadanGopâl, Who is the su*preme* most person of Vrindâban, is really and truly the Son of Nanda *Mahâ*râj – He is verily the One Who sports in the *râs*-dance with Sri Râdhâ and Lalitâ. He is the same One Who has manifested Himself as the captivator of the Love-God and steals all the hearts with His enchanting sweetness while Srimati Râdhârâni and Lalitâ serve Him on both sides." – (C.C.Âdi.5.218-223)

"All the trees of Vrindâban are *kalpa-vrikshas*[2] and the *Yogpeeth* is situated therein. A gem-studded altar with a gem-studded throne is placed at the centre of this *Yogpeeth*. Sri Govinda, Who is none other than the Son of Nanda *Mahâ*râj, is seated atop this gem-throne. He is expressing His sweetness and mesmerizing the universe. Srimati Râdhârâni is seated at His left with all Her *sakhis* and the sweet Lord performs so many divine pastimes such as the *râs*-dance with them in charming manner. His devotees sit in the lotus-pose and meditate on Him. They worship Him with the eighteen syllable *mantra*. All His devotees in the fourteen worlds meditate on Him and the residents of Vaikuntha sing His praises. His sweetness drags Laxmi*devi* from the bosom of Lord Nârâyan – He is so attractive and Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has described Him wonderfully. There is no doubt

[1] '*poyâr'* is a verse from Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita
[2] Wish-fulfilling trees

that this Govindadev is none other than the Son of Nanda *Mahâ*râj Himself. If a fool considers Him to be an 'image' he commits a foul *aparâdh* and He shall never be redeemed – he shall fall in the hellish planets – what more can I say?" – (C.C.Âdi.225-226)

We all know the story of Sri SâkshiGopâl Who walked all the way from the Vrindâban to the far away Vidyânagar, simply to shower His bounties on them when the King of Utkal (Orissa) conquered Vidyânagar, by the command of Lord SâkshiGopâl, he took Him to Cuttack and installed His *sevâ* there. Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita states –

"The queen (of Orissa) came to take *darshan* of Sri SâkshiGopâl and offered Him many ornaments with devotion. She was wearing a very precious pearl on her nose-pin. She wished to give it to the Lord. 'I wish His nostril was pierced – then this maidservant would have surely offered Him this pearl' – she sighed. Then she paid obeisance and returned to her palace. When the night was about to end Gopâlji appeared in a dream and said – 'When I was a child my mother had pierced my nose and had lovingly placed a pearl on it. That piercing exists on my nose even today – put that pearl for me and fulfill your wish.' The queen woke up and narrated her dream to the king. She came to the temple carrying the pearl and accompanied by the king. She saw the piercing on the nose and put the pearl for him. Then she became so ecstatic that she threw an extremely grand feast in honor of this sweet occasion." – (C.C.Madhya.5.125-132)

These evidences drive home the message that there is no difference between Sri *Bhagavân* and His Deity – same is the case with Sri *Bhagavân* and his Holy Name. The one who thinks otherwise will surely suffer in hell.

"Who considers Sri Vishnu's Deity and Shâlagrâm to be stone, the Spiritual Master a human being, considers a Vaishnav's caste, the foot-wash of Vishnu and Vaishnavs as plain water, Sri Vishnu's Holy Name that can destroy all sins as ordinary sound and Sri Vishnu, the Lord God as equal to other Gods – he is a resident of hell". – (Padyâvali)

This verse signifies that although the Holy Name appears like all other sound vibrations and exists as words He is the Supreme Being Sri *Bhagavân* the embodiment of intense eternal conscious bliss.

Glory of chanting the Holy Name

All scriptures such as the Vedas and the saints have openly extolled the glory of chanting the Holy Name. The Rig Ved has stated –

"*om âhasya jânanto nâma chidviviktan mahaste vishno sumatim bhajâmahe om tatsadityâdi*." – (1.156.3)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse as follows –

"O Vishno! Your name is conscious and hence self-manifested. If we do not realize the correct way to pronounce it or entirely comprehend its glory - if we know only little bit of its magnificence and continue to chant we shall still gain knowledge about You."

Sri Krishna has told Sri Arjun in Âdi purân –

"Dear Arjun, who sing my name and dance before me – I am telling the truth – they buy me (I become their slave). Who sing my name and cry before me I become their slave since I am Janârdan[1]. I do not belong to anyone else."

Sri Krishna has told in the Mahâbhârat –

"Krishnâ (Draupadi) has called out to me crying "Govinda!" although I am so far from her – this cry rendered from her heart has put me in a debt that is increasing every moment – this debt is refusing to leave my mind (I cannot forget this debt)."

Sri Bali Mahârâj told Shukrâchârya in Brihan-Nâradiya Purân –

[1] The One Who wipes the tears of His dear ones

"When the two syllables "'Ha' and 'ri'" are present on the tip of one's tongue he attains the realm of Sri Vishnu and he never returns to this world."

Lord Shiva told Sri Nârad in Linga Purân –

"*Harinâm* destroys the evils of *Kaliyug*; if someone chants this name while going, sitting, standing, sleeping, eating, and breathing, just to complete a sentence or without any reason or reverence – he attains liberation; and who chants *Harinâm* with devotion goes to His abode and gains the Supreme Being."

Srimad-Bhâgavatam recommends chanting of the Holy Name as the supreme means and the topmost achievable goal –

"*etan-nirvidyamânânâmichchhatâmakutobhayam,*
yoginâm nripa nirnitam harer-nâmânukirtanam."
- (S.B.2.1.11)

Shridhar Swâmi has explained this verse as follows –

"No means is greater than chanting the Holy Name either for a *sâdhak* or for a *siddha* (one who has realized his spiritual goal). Therefore Srimad-Bhâgavatam is saying – 'O King, who wants to fulfill material desires must necessarily chant the Holy Name to accomplish their goal; the ones striving for liberation too have only one option – that is, to chant the Holy Name; when the *yogis* (the *gyânis*) practice their path nicely it makes them take to the path of chanting the Holy Name. There is no need to cite any evidence for this – that is why Srimad-Bhâgavatam uses the word '*nirnitam*', meaning, it is an axiom – have no doubt about it."

We can achieve all our desires by resorting to Sri *Harinâm Sankirtan* alone and although we may not perfect other parts of *bhajan,* simply by chanting the Holy Name we attain perfection.

We can chant the Holy Name in any place or at any time. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written –

"Chanting the Holy Name has the same power in all the ages; however in *Kaliyug* Sri *Bhagavân* Himself exhorts the living being to chant, hence it has more glory in *Kaliyug*. In an ordinary *Kaliyug*, Sri *Bhagavân* appears as a *Yugâvatâr* and spreads the Holy Name, but this is a very special *Kaliyug* since *Swayam Bhagavân* Sriman-Mahâprabhu has descended along with His associates. He Himself chants the Holy Name and makes the living beings do so. Therefore *Harinâm kirtan* is more wonderful now. Even though we have to perform other parts of *bhajan,* we should do them along with chanting. When Karbhâjan Rishi described the *yuga-dharma* of *Kaliyug* he told King Nimi –

"In *Kaliyug* the ones who are very intelligent worship Sri Hari with plenty of *Sankirtan-yagna* (by chanting lots of *Harinâm*)" – (S.B.11.5.32)

"Sri Krishna-Chaitanya Mahâprabhu has revealed the *Harinâm Sankirtan*. Whoever worships Him by chanting the Holy Name is indeed blessed. He alone has good intelligence while the rest of the people are foolish. Chanting the Holy Name is the essence of all *yagnas*." - (C.C.Âdi.3.77-78)

The scriptures highly extol Sri *Harinâm kirtan* and state its colossal power – let us hear some of it. The most sinful person can destroy his sins by taking refuge of the Holy Name –

"Just as the roar of a lion drives out the wild animals man can annihilate all his sins by chanting the Holy Name." – (Garud Purân)

What to speak of destroying sins; the Holy Name can redeem one even from the hell –

"Wherever the residents of hell chanted the Holy Name they gained devotion for Sri *Bhagavân* and attained divine abodes." – (Nrisimha Purân)

The Holy Name destroys mental as well as physical ailments –

"As soon as we remember His Name and glorify Him all mental and physical ailments are destroyed - I pay obeisance unto That Sri Anantadev (Sri *Bhagavân*)." – (Skanda Purân)

"When we chant the Holy Name constantly all our illnesses, troubles, disturbance are destroyed and we are filled with peace." (Brihad Vishnu Purân)

"Even the most fallen sinner gains a pure heart and becomes a devotee if he chants the Holy Name continuously." – (Brahmânda Purân)

"Who chants the names Hare, Keshav, Govinda and Vâsudev – *Kaliyug* has no mastery (effect) on them." – (Brihan-Nâradiya Purân)

"My dear child, you need not recite the Rig, Sam and Yajur Vedas; simply chant the name of Govinda continuously since His Name alone is worthy of praise." – (Skanda Purân)

"We can get the result of serving hundreds of holy places by chanting Sri Vishnu's name." – (Vâman Purân)

"It is extremely pious to donate one crore cows during the solar eclipse, to reside for one *kalpa* in the water of Gangâ at Prayâg, to perform one million *yagnas* and give alms in gold equal to Mount Meru – however they are not equal to a hundredth fraction of chanting Lord Govinda's name." – (Skanda Purân)

"If we chant Sri Vishnu's name we get rid of the cycle of birth and death, our enemies such as lust and anger are destroyed and we gain spiritual knowledge." – (Skanda Purân)

"There are various powers (*shaktis*) in alms-giving, fasting, austerities and holy places. Some *shaktis* can destroy all the sins of the *devatâs* and grant well being. Râjsuya, Ashwamedh *yagna* and spiritual knowledge too have power. *Bhagavân* Sri Hari has dragged all those *shaktis* from there and placed them in His Name." – (Skanda Purân)

"The ones who chant 'Nârâyan', 'Jagannâth', 'Vâsudev', 'Janârdan' etc are praised everywhere." – (Brihan-Nâradiya)

"The ones who have no other respite, are steeped in sense gratification, are inimical by nature, without spiritual knowledge and material detachment, without any control over sexual desire and devoid of any righteous conduct – they can easily attain a state only by chanting the Holy Name – such that even the sum total of all-righteous people[1] cannot reach." – (Padma Purân)

"The ones who always chant the names such as 'Nârâyan', 'Achyuta', 'Ananta', 'Vâsudev' etc. are united with me." – (Varâha Purân)

"The one who always engages in sins, even he can attain the supreme abode of Sri Vishnu by chanting the Holy Name." – (Nandi Purân)

"Dear brahmins, the ones who constantly chant Your Holy Name in spite of being hungry and thirsty – Sri Hari is extremely pleased with them." – (Brihan-Nâradiya Purân)

"Chanting the Holy Name of Sri Dâmodar is the only good thing in life – it is also a treasure worth gaining and the sole benefit of living." – (Skanda Purân and Padma Purân)

"The connoisseurs of *bhakti ras* consider the chanting of the Holy Name as the outcome of *bhakti*, since the Holy Name is the only sure way to arouse precious divine love – it never fails." (Srila Sanâtan Goswâmi in Brihad-Bhâgavatam.2.3.165)

Srila Sanâtan Goswâmipâd has further explained this statement–

"Aho! How much can I extol Sri *Harinâm-sankirtan,* which is the greatest of all means? The connoisseurs of *bhakti* have ascertained chanting of the Holy Name as the highest achievable goal. You may ask – *prem* is the outcome of devotional practice and chanting is the means to achieve it, why are you calling it the 'result of *bhakti*'? My answer is – you are right. However chanting the Holy Name leads certainly to *prem* (whosoever chants the Holy Name will surely get *prem*), therefore the Holy Name is synonymous with prem. Therefore we are calling it the result of *bhakti*. In fact there is no exception to this rule."

[1] People who always conduct themselves righteously

As a result the saints call *Harinâm-sankirtan* as the product of *bhakti*. When we chant the Holy Name we naturally gain priceless divine love – the result of devotional practice. Hence chanting is our goal.

Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has stated with His holy lips –

"Chanting the Holy Name destroys all our sins and redeems us from material attachment. It purifies the innermost heart and is the source of all devotional practices. It arouses Sri Krishna-*prem*, and makes us relish its nectar. It gives us Sri Krishna and immerses us in the nectarine ocean of *sevâ*." – (C.C.Antya.20.10-11)

The special characteristic of chanting Sri Krishna's name

We have already learnt that Sri *Bhagavân's* name is eternal, conscious and blissful just like Sri *Bhagavân*. From this point of view all His names are equal. Yet if we analyze the glory of the Holy Name we can understand the glory of Sri Krishna-*nâm*. Since the Holy Name is non-different from Sri *Bhagavân*, the glory of the names is in proportion to the greatness of the divine manifestations. Therefore since Sri Krishna is *Swayam Bhagavân*, His name too is special – naturally. Chanting Sri Vishnu's name is more glorious than taking the names of *devatâs,* while a single name of Lord Râmchandra is equal to a thousand names of Sri Vishnu. Sriman-*Mahâ*dev told the same to the Mother Goddess –

"*râmo râmeti râmeti rame râme manorame,*
sahasra-nâmabhistulyam râmanâma varânane."

Sri Râmchandra is superior to Matsya, Kurma and other incarnations – this we learn from the scriptures. Therefore Padma Purân says that the name 'Râm' is more glorious than the names of the other incarnations. Shata-nâm Stotra also corroborates this fact –

"A single name of Sri Vishnu can yield more result than reciting all the Vedas. Yet a single name of Lord Râm equals one thousand names of Sri Vishnu."

Brahmânda Purân says –

"We get the same result by uttering Sri Krishna's name once and by chanting the *sahasranâm*[1] of Lord Vishnu thrice."

This shows that if we chant Sri Krishna's name once it is equal to saying the name of Lord Râm thrice[2]. Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says –

"The name of Sri Râmchandra grants liberation – hence it is *'târak'* (the liberator), however the name of Sri Krishna gives *prem*, therefore it is *'pârak'* (the One Who gives love)." – (C.C.Antya.3.244)

Thus the scriptures and preceptors tell us that the name of Sri Krishna is the most glorious of all divine names. Sri Krishna himself has declared –

"*nâmnâm mukhyatamam nâma krishnâkhyam me parantapa"*

Meaning - "Dear Arjun, 'Krishna' is the greatest of all my names."

Also from the point of view relish, Sri Krishna's name is incomparable. We see in Prabhâs-Khanda –

"O Shounak, Sri Krishna's name is sweeter than sweet, is the goodness amongst all that is good, the most delicious fruit of the Vedas that are like a wish-fulfilling creeper and it is transcendental – if anyone says this name even once – be it out of respect or disrespect – it redeems that man."

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has written a very sweet verse in his drama Vidagdha-Mâdhav –

"They dance on my tongue and arouse the desire to possess innumerable tongues! When they slightly brush against my ears, they make me crave for millions of ears! They lodge in my heart

[1] one thousand names
[2] Since one Râm-nâm is equal to one thousand Vishnu-nâm

and stupefy all my senses! Ohh! I do not know what immense nectar these two syllables – 'Kri' and 'shna' possess!!"

Pada-kartâ[1] Srila Jadunandan Thâkur has rendered an extraordinarily superb translation of this verse –

"As soon as I utter Krishna-*nâm*, my tongue dances incessantly and immensely increases my longing; the Holy Name is so sweet that I cannot control my heart and I desire innumerable tongues! Oh! How can I express the sweetness of the Holy Name?

Who has made these two syllables "Kri' and 'shna' and with which nectar? They are so sweet that they enhance so much bliss in the ears which start sprouting (the ears get enlarged to hear more) and I crave for millions of ears so that I may relish the Holy Name to my heart's content!

When I see the two syllables 'Kri' and 'shna' my scorched eyes are soothed and they long to see Krishna in person. Oh! Only if I could have countless eyes then I could behold Krishna's beauty, since His Name is non-different from His body.

When the Holy Name enters the heart, I want to spread wings, all my senses dance in delight – the Holy Name maddens me with *prem*!

When the Holy Name enters simply one ear, it forsakes all other activities and the Holy Name arouses all the *bhâvs*. Sri Krishna-*nâm* is the repository of all sweetness and is the casket of entire *ras* – thus says poet Jadunandan dâs."

Sriman-Mahâprabhu has said –

"ânandâmbudhi-vardhanam pratipadam purnâmritâswâdanam,
sarvâtmâ-snaoanam param vijayate srikrishna-sankirtanam."

Meaning - "It enhances the ocean of bliss, each moment it gives the relish of complete nectar, supremely delights all senses, mind, intellect and even the soul – That glorious Sri Krishna-*nâm-sankirtan* is reigning supreme." – (Shikshâshtakam)

Srila Sanâtan Goswâmipâd has written –

"When the nectarine *ras* of Sri Krishna-*nâm* manifests itself in just a single organ – that is – the tongue - it overfloods all other senses with its own sweet *ras."*

Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has advised all humankind in *Kaliyug* to chant the Mahâmantra composed of 32 syllables, for it is the only way to get deliverance. Sri Chaitanya-Bhâgabat says –

"âpone sobâre prabhu kore upadeshe,
krishna-nâm Mahâmantra shunoho harishe.
'hare krishna hare krishna krishna krishna hare hare,
hare râma hare râma râma râma hare hare.'
prabhu kohe kohilâm ei Mahâmantra,
ihâ jopo giyâ shobe koriâ nirbandha.
ihâ hoite sarba-siddhi hoibe shobâr,
sarbakkhan bolo ithe bidhi nâhi âr."

Meaning - "The Lord Himself has advised everyone – joyously hear Sri Krishna-nâm – the *Mahâmantra*. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Râm Hare Râm Râm Râm Hare Hare. The Lord said – I have told you this *Mahâmantra*; now go home and chant it with determination. By chanting this *mantra* you will accomplish everything, keep on chanting it all the time – there is no other rule."

In this *poyâr, 'ihâ jopo giyâ shobe koriâ nirbandha*[2]' indicates that the Lord instructed us to chant the *Mahamantra* by keeping a count (certain number of rounds). On the other hand '*sarbakkhan bolo ithe bidhi nâhi âr*[3]' means He told us to chant it loudly without keeping count.

[1] A Vaishnava rhymester
[2] now go home and chant it with determination
[3] keep on chanting it all the time – there is no other rule

Sriman-Mahâprabhu's instruction shows that we can chant the *Mahâmantra* of 32 syllables silently (as *jap*) and also pronounce it loudly as in '*kirtan*'. Some say – "You cannot chant a *mantra* loudly. It is outside the scriptural law. Since the '*hare-krishneti'-nâm* is *Mahâmantra*, we should only do *jap* by keeping count; we cannot sing it loudly." In this context we would like to state that – only when it contains a '*beej*' (seed-word) and words such as '*swâhâ*' and when it contains the Chaturthi-Vibhakti (the 4th case or the dative case) we can call it a *'mantra'*. The Hare Krishna *Mahâmantra* is an address (calling out to someone) and does not contain any of these. Hence any intelligent person should not doubt that we can chant it as *'jap'* and also say it loudly. Especially when we get proof for such activity in the scriptures, Mahâjan-statements and more so from the instruction and conduct of Sriman-Mahâprabhu Who is none other than *Swayam Bhagavân* (God Himself).

We are mentioning here in brief. Sri Padma Purân states –

"***harer-nâma-Mahâmantrair****-nashyet papa-pishâchakam,*
*harer-agre-swanair-****uchchair-nrityam*** *stan-nâm-krin-narah,*
punâti bhuvanam vipra ! gangâdi salilam yathâ,
hare pradakshinam kurvann-uchchais-tan-nâma-krin-narah,
karatâlâdi sandhânam suswaram kala-shabditam."

Meaning - "If anyone dances in front of Sri Hari, chanting the ***Harinâm Mahâmantra*** **loudly**, his sins that are like ghosts, are destroyed. Just as the holy waters such as the Gangâ, purify the world, similarly those who loudly sing the *Mahâmantra* in a sweet voice with the accompaniment of cymbals – and circumambulate Sri Hari – they purify the world."

Those who say that although we may chant the *Mahâmantra* loudly, it is compulsory to keep a count and that there is no evidence of chanting the *Mahâmantra* without keeping a count – they should read this verse from Sri Padma Purân. Then they will easily understand that when we do *kirtan* while dancing along with playing the *kartâls* (cymbals), we cannot possibly keep count; so the countless chanting of the *Mahâmantra* is also corroborated.

Srila Kabi Karnapur has described Sriman-Mahâprabhu's renunciation-ceremony in his great drama Sri Chaitanya-Charit *Mahâkâvya* in the following manner.

"*tatah sri gourângah samavadadateeva-pramudito,*
hare krishnetiuchchyairvada muhuriti shrimayatanuh,
tato'soutat prochya prativalitaromâncha-lalito
rudanstattat karmârabhata bahu-duhkhair-vidalitah."

Meaning - "When Lord Gourânga was taking *sanyâs,* the barber was extremely sad; he held on to the shaving blade and simply could not bring himself to shave off the Lord's long and thick curls. Then Lord Gourânga told him to repeat the Hare Krishna *Mahâmantra* loudly. The barber obeyed Him. He loudly cried out the Hare Krishna *Mahâmantra* and weeping all the while, he shaved the Lord's head. While doing so, he displayed goosebumps – the sign of ecstasy."

Certainly this is chanting *Mahâmantra* without keeping count, since how could the barber keep count while shaving? The question does not arise at all. Not only have Sriman-Mahâprabhu instructed us to chant the *Mahâmantra* without keeping count, He has done it Himself. Srila Lochan dâs Thâkur has stated in his text Sri Chaitanya-Mangal –

"*hare krishna nâm seho bole nirantar".*

Here '*bole'* means 'tells' and '*nirantar*' means 'constantly'. It clearly indicates that the Lord chanted the *Mahâmantra* loudly and constantly, which naturally shows 'without keeping count'. Sri Vrindâban dâs Thâkur, who is the incarnation of Vyasdev, too says –

"*prasanna sri-mukhe 'hare krishna krishna' boli,*
bijoy hoilâ gourchandra kutuhali.
'hare krishna hare krishna' boli prem-sukhe,
pratyaksha hoilâ âshi adwaita sammukhe."

Meaning - "Lord Gourachandra strode in eagerly with a beaming face, chanting 'Hare Krishna Krishna'. He said 'Hare Krishna Hare Krishna' with blissful love and appeared before Lord Advaita."

Sriman-Mahâprabhu instructed countless chanting of *Mahâmantra* and did it Himself too; however He also instructed us to chant the *Mahâmantra* by keeping count as well.

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has stated –

"hare krishnetyuchchaih sphuritarasano nâma-gananâkrita-granthi-shrenih subhaga-kati-sutrojjwalakarah".

Srila Raghunâth dâs Goswâmi has written –

"*nijatve goudiyân jagati parigrihya prabhurimân hare krishnety-evam gananâvidhinâ kirtayata bhoh"*

Thus we have proved beyond doubt that we should chant the *Mahâmantra* by keeping count as well as without keeping count. Both these statements prove that Sriman-Mahâprabhu chanted the *Mahâmantra* mentally as well as loudly, and by keeping count and not keeping count.

Srila Sârvabhouma Bhattachârya *Mahâ*shay has written in Sri Chaitanya-Shatak –

"*vishanna-chittân kalipâpa-bheetan*
samvikshya gouro harinâma-mantram
swayam dadou bhakta-janân samâdishat
kurushva sankirtanam nritya-vâdyaih."

Meaning - "When Sri Chaitanya *Mahâ*prabhu saw the people getting afraid of the sinful *Kaliyug* and depressed, He gave them the *Harinâm-mantra* and issued a blanket order to chant in congregation this *Mahâmantra* along with dancing and music."

'*samâdishat'* indicates that Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu had descended with the firm determination to immerse humankind in the *ras* of eternal love and that was possible only through loud congregational chanting of the *Mahâmantra*. '*Jap'* redeems a single soul, whereas loud *kirtan* delivers the animate and the inanimate objects, since they too hear it. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written –

"*nâma-kirtananchedam-uchchaireva prashastam."*

Meaning - "The loud chanting of the Holy Name is more popular."

Along with the above statement Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has also cited the reason for this –

"Those who chant the Holy Name loudly deliver not only themselves, but others also. They cause welfare to every living being. Prahlâd Mahâshay has thus glorified Lord Nrisimha in Sri Nrisimha Purân in the following manner – 'O my Lord, the great devotees who loudly chant You the Holy Name with extreme joy – they are the selfless friends of all living beings'." – (B.S.269)

Nâmâchârya Srila Haridâs Thâkur has vociferously praised loud chanting of the *Mahâmantra* with his holy lips –

"*jopile se krishna-nâm âponi se tore,*
uchcha sankirtane para-upakâr kore.
ataeb uchcha kori kirtan korile,
shatagun phal hoy sarba-shâstra bole.
jihbâ pâiâo nara bine sarba prâni,
na pare bolite krishna nâm heno dhwani.
byartho janma ihârâ nistâr jâhâ hoite,
bolo dekhi kon dosh se karma korite.
keho âponâre mâtra koroye poshan,
keho bâ poshan kore sahasreko jon.
duite ke boro, bhâbi bujhoho âpone,
ei abhiprây gun uchcha sankirtane."

Meaning - "When we chant Sri Krishna-*nâm* silently we only deliver ourselves, however when we chant loudly, we are helping others too. Therefore all the scriptures hail loud *sankirtan* and say that it is hundred times more fruitful than silent chanting (*jap*). All living beings, with the exception of man, cannot utter Sri Krishna-*nâm,* even though they may have tongues. In that case, their birth is useless, since the only way to deliver ourselves is to chant Sri Krishna-*nâm*. Tell me then, what is the problem if we do this? Someone feeds only himself, while another person feeds one thousand – decide and tell me who is greater of the two? That is why loud *sankirtan* is more praiseworthy than silent *jap*." – (Sri Chaitanya-Bhâgabat)

Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu drowned the universe in *prem-ras* merely by the loud chanting of the Hare Krishna-*Mahâmantra*. His confidential associate Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has written –

"sri-chaitanya-mukhodgirnâ hare-krishneti-varnakâh,
majjayanto jagat premni vijayantâm tad-âhvayâh."

Meaning - "The countless chanting of Hare Krishna *Mahâmantra,* that has 32 syllables and has sprung from Sri Chaitanya *Mahâ*prabhu's holy lips, are submerging the entire universe in the ocean of *prem* – all victory to such *Mahâmantra*!" – (Laghu-Bhâgavatâmritam)

Sripâd Baladev Vidyâhbushan has explained *'tad-âhvayâh'* (in the verse) as *'krishna-namâni'* – meaning – all the sixteen names belong to Sri Krishna. This name alone can deliver any man and is so powerful that it can immerse anybody in *prem-ras*.

How to chant Sri Hari-*nâm*

Chanting the Holy Name is the infallible way to gain *prem*. How to chant the Holy Name? Sriman-Mahâprabhu has Himself instructed us about this with His holy lips –

"How should we chant the Holy Name so that we gain *prem*? O Swarup and Râma Roy, Listen to the process! We should be lower than a blade of grass and as tolerant as a tree, we should not expect any respect from others, yet respect everybody – in this manner we should constantly chant the Holy Name." – (C.C.Antya.20.16)

Sriman-Mahâprabhu has explained further –

"We should be superior in all respects, yet consider ourselves more useless than a blade of grass. We should be tolerant like a tree in two ways – a tree never protests even when it is cut; it dies of thirst, yet does not beg for water. In spite of this, it gives its wealth to whosoever asks for it. It bears the heat and rain, yet offers shelter to others. Similarly a Vaishnav should be superior and yet devoid of false ego. We should respect all living beings knowing that Sri Krishna is present in them. When we chant the Holy Name in this manner, we gain love for the lotus feet of Sri Krishna." – (C.C.Antya.20.17-21)

Offenses alone can stop the Holy Name

The Holy Name is so extremely powerful that nothing can deter it – it is impossible for us to possess any *anartha* that can prevent the Holy Name from leading us to *prem* – well, except one barrier – and that is *'aparâdh'.* When Sriman-Mahâprabhu spoke the above verse to Swarup-Dâmodar and Râmânanda Roy, He axed the very root of *nâm-aparâdh*[1]. He instructed us to chant the Holy Name with humbleness. Humility is the soul of devotional practice.

What is humility?

'Humility' is a *bhâv* that makes us feel that we are amazingly worthless and fallen, although we may possess all good qualities. When we possess such humility it will save us from committing Vaishnav-offense and then Sri Nâm-Prabhu will be pleased with us. However we should not think that – "first I will acquire this great quality 'humbleness' and then I will start chanting". As we continue to chant the Holy Name the humility as described by Sriman-Mahâprabhu will arise in our heart on its own and make us chant inoffensively. Of course, if we wish to attain *prem*, we should

[1] Offenses against the Holy Name

pay great attention to all the offenses, and chant with utmost humility – this is the instruction of the great souls as well as of the scriptures.

Let us discuss the ten offenses in brief.

The First Offense

Sri Padma Purân says – "When we blaspheme the devotees we supremely offend the Holy Name. The devotees who steadfastly chant the Holy Name are preaching the glory of Sri Nâm-Prabhu to the world; how can the Holy Name tolerate the blasphemy of such devotees?"

Ten offenses

Amongst all the offenses this one is the strongest, hence we call it *Mahad-aparâdh* or 'great offense'. Mostly it is this offense that obstructs us, although we firmly chant the Holy Name and practice devotion. It is the chief offense to the Holy Name; therefore the preceptors have posted it on top of the list.

What does '*nindâ*' or 'blasphemy' mean?

Srimad-Bhâgavatam says –

"*nindanam dosha kirtanam"*

Meaning - " '*Nindâ*' or 'blasphemy' means 'to glorify[1] someone's fault'."

When our speech shows disrespect, intolerance, envy or violence towards a devotee – it is '*nindâ*'. Just censuring a devotee is 'great offense' – then we can easily guess what huge offense we will commit when we treat him with envy and violence.

Often we think that if a devotee does something foul, then why should it be wrong to criticize? For are we not speaking out the fact? To tell you the truth, even thinking like this amounts to an offense. The scriptures have stated that "*nindâ* means 'to discuss a fault' " – the question whether it is true or false does not arise. The scriptures say – "*suchakasyâpi tad-bhavet*" – this means "do not discuss a devotee's fault".

Who is a *sâdhu?*

Here it is natural for us to raise this question. Who is a *sâdhu*or devotee*?* The answer is – "'*Sâdhu'* refers to all those who have taken the shelter of 'Bhâgavat-*dharma*'. A devotee has forsaken even the desire for liberation; he has accepted the path of devotional practice solely to gain the service of Sri Krishna's lotus feet – so he is '*sâdhu'.*"

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has written in Mâdhurya-Kâdambini – "We should not think that only those who are kind, peaceful, tolerant and are endowed with all good qualities are devotees or '*sâdhus*' in the real sense, and that if we blaspheme them, we commit an offense, but there is no problem if we criticize those who do not have such sterling qualities."

Actually, even if "*sarvâchâra-vivarjitâh shathadhiyo vrâtyâ jagad-vanchakâh*" – the ones who are devoid of all etiquettes, are big frauds and are cheating the entire world – if they worship Sri *Bhagavân* – we should count them as '*sâdhus'*. This is because we should never blaspheme a devotee who adores Sri *Bhagavân* exclusively, even though he may be evil. We have to accept him as a *'sâdhu'*. Sri Krishna has Himself instructed Arjun –

"O Arjun, If one is extremely evil – that is – harms others, steals others' property and wife – yet worships me exclusively (does not worship anyone other than me, does not practice any other path such as *gyân* or *karma*, resorting only to *bhakti,* does not wish to attain anyone other than me) – accept him as a '*sâdhu'*. After all, he has taken to the best path (meaning – he has decided, whether I go to hell or get a lower form of life – I will worship none other than Sri Krishna), so he is a *'sâdhu'*." – (B.G.9.30)

If we blaspheme such a devotee we are bound to commit offence. Then we need not stress how much *aparâdh* we will commit if we criticize a good devotee. When we see a bad devotee, we may feel like criticizing him; so the Lord has called him a *'sâdhu'* so that we remember not to blaspheme him. Whether we speak or hear evil about a devotee – both are offenses. Therefore if

[1] Here it means to speak aloud

someone blasphemes a devotee, we should close our ears, remember Sri *Bhagavân* and leave that place. Sriman-Mahâprabhu has illuminated this subject more in detail.

The Lord said –"If I hear even once Sri Krishna-*nâm* from someone's lips, he is worthy of worship and the best of all." – (C.C.Madhya.15.106)

"Therefore, one who says Sri Krishna–*nâm* once – I consider him a Vaishnav and revere him." – (C.C.Madhya.15.111)

There is none who has not uttered Sri Krishna-*nâm* even once, so we should forsake all criticisms. Then it will be easy for us to save ourselves from this 'great offense'.

The Lord said – "No purpose is served by criticizing; sin is all that we gain. As a result, the one who does not criticize is the most blessed of all."

"The one who does not criticize, and constantly chants Sri Krishna-*nâm*, he alone is invincible, his consciousness has awakened and he shall conquer Sri Krishna easily." – (Sri Chaitanya Bhâgabat)

The Second Offense

"shivasya shri-vishnorya iha guna-nâmâdi sakalam,
dhiyâ bhinnam pashyet sa khalu harinâmâhitakarah"

Meaning - "If we consider the qualities, name etc of Sri Vishnu and Sri Shiva as different from each other, it is not good for our *Harinâm* (= offense)."

This indicates that we should not think that Sri Vishnu is a power and Sri Shiva is another power. Same goes for their names and qualities also. If we do make this distinction, we are endorsing polytheism – this displeases the Holy Name. Sri Vishnu is 'the One without a second'. He is the Supreme Controller. Brahmâ, Shiva etc, are all His manifestations – no one has any independent power. To prove this Sri Brahma-Samhitâ has stated –

"Milk transforms into curds; curds are non-different from milk. In the same manner He descends as Shambhu to destroy the world – I adore That Primeval Lord Sri Govinda."

Actually Sri Krishna is the Supreme Controller. Brahmâ, Shiva and the other *devatâs* have come from Him; so they are neither different from Him nor are they equal to Him. This is because He is the cause of all causes – *Swayam Bhagavân* (God Himself). As a result it is an offense to consider Sriman-Mahâdev a different controller or equal to Sri Krishna. The devotees who adore Sri Vishnu exclusively, consider Sri Shiva as a 'Supreme Vaishnav' and revere him. Some devotees consider him as Sri Vishnu's *gunâvatâr.* The concluding part of Srimad-Bhâgavatam says –

'Just as Gangâ is the greatest of all rivers, Sri Krishna is the supreme amongst *devatâs,* Shambhu (Shiva) is the foremost Vaishnav, and similarly Srimad-Bhâgavatam is the supreme most Purân."

– (S.B.12.13.16)

The Third Offense –

If we disregard Sri Gurudev or consider him ordinary, we offend the Holy Name. This happens when we do not know the facts about Sri Gurudev. Then we take him in a worldly sense. Sri Krishna has Himself said to Sri Uddhav –

"Know the Spiritual Master as non-different from me. Do not ever disregard him or consider him mundane and behave adversely towards him." – (S.B.11.17.27)

If we think of Sri Gurudev as a human being all our efforts become fruitless.

Sri Nârad said –"The Spiritual Master is Sri *Bhagavân* manifested before us. He endows us with spiritual enlightenment. If we are as foolish as to consider him a mortal, all our spiritual efforts such as study of the scriptures become as useless as the *hasti-snân* (elephant-bath)[1]." – (S.B.7.15.26)

This also indicates that –

[1] An elephant has the habit of taking bath nicely in the river, and after coming out of the water it sprinkles dust on itself; hence its bath is of no use.

"When we adore the Spiritual Master as much as we love Sri *Bhagavân*, then we get all the inner meanings of the scriptures form that great soul".– (Shwetâshwatar Upanishad)

Therefore we should always think about the good qualities of the Spiritual Master and sing his glory. We should consider his body as divine and not see any fault n him. We must realize that when we do not perform *bhajan* as per his instructions, and do not chant the *mantras* given by him, we disregard the Spiritual Master and it offends the Holy Name.

The Fourth offense - *shruti-shâstra-nindanam* –

This refers to blaspheming the Vedas and scriptures following the Vedas. 'Blaspheming' includes disregard, irreverence or any other adverse behavior. The Vedas are transcendental and self-manifested. "*Vedayatiti vedah*" –"Veda is one who makes himself known". The Itihâsas, Purânas etc. elaborate the instructions of the Vedas. Srimad-Bhâgavatam is in accordance with the Vedas. Criticizing and disrespecting these scriptures is an offense.

The Vedas have three parts (called '*kânda*' or 'trunks'). They are *karma-kânda, gyân-kânda* and *upâsanâ-kânda*. Naturally a devotee will not criticize the shrutis that extol devotion; however if a devotee thinks that those parts of the Vedas that instruct about *karma* and *gyân* are nonsense and because they do not directly deal with devotion, we can disrespect them – then he is committing an offense. We should realize that the Vedas are most compassionate. Not everybody is qualified for *bhakti*. There are people who are promiscuous and deeply attached to material enjoyments. The Vedas are resolved to enlighten even such fallen ones. The merciful Vedas instruct them in such a way that when these people follow the Vedic injunctions, someday they too will enter the temple of Bhakti *devi*. This is the root intention of those portions of the Vedas that preach *karma* and *gyân*. Thus when we know the truth about the scriptures, we will not commit the offense of criticizing them.

The Fifth Offense – *tatha-artha-vâdo* –

We see that the scriptures highly extol Sri *Harinâm*. The glory of the Holy Name is incomparable. When we think that these are mere eulogies, and are not true, we commit offense.

To tell you the truth, the magnificence of the Holy Name is like a fathomless ocean. It has no limits. How much of its glory have the scripture and preceptors been able to express? They must have revealed only a drop of this ocean. Yet, if we think that it is merely 'glory' and not true – can we guess how much offense we are committing?

Why do the Vedas sing false glory?

Here we may question that the Vedas extol even *devatâ-pujâ*, sacrifices etc. and state that the joy in the heavenly planets never comes to an end, it is limitless and we should make it our supreme goal. Are they not exaggeration? We, the devotees, boldly proclaim that these statements are not true, yet we do not commit offense while saying so. Then why do we offend the Holy Name when we think that the scriptures are simply exaggerating its glory? The answer is that – the Vedas want to draw non-emotional lusty people who are highly attached to material comforts towards spiritual life. So they eulogize heavenly-joy. With the help of these statements the Vedas want to tempt these people and improve the quality of their lives. On the other hand, Sri *Bhagavân* is absolute, the One and only the Supreme Object. His Holy Name, *bhakti* and *prem* are so inconceivably great that even the Vedas fail to grasp them. They are beyond the Vedas. Hence there is no question of the Vedas singing false glory of the Holy Name.

"Sri Krishna is Truth and Sri Krishna-*bhakti* is love personified. Sri Krishna, His *bhakti* and the chanting of His Holy name are all blissful." – (C.C.Âdi.1.9.6)

The Sixth Offense - *harinâmni kalpanam* –

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this as –

"The glory of the Holy Name is incomparable. To prove that it is not so great, one may put forth some imaginary meaning of the Holy Name. It is an offense."

The Holy Name is exceedingly great and has colossal impact. Intelligent people will not find it difficult to believe. In this world we can perceive the power of certain, gems, *mantras* etc. How these objects have such power – it is beyond our comprehension. But we cannot ignore their

influence either. When the power of these material objects is beyond our intellect, how can we conceive the greatness of the Holy Name that is transcendental, divine, exceedingly inconceivable and extraordinarily powerful? The scriptures have forbidden us to analyze transcendental objects –

achintyâh khalu ye bhâvâ na tânstarkena yojayet,
prakritibhyah param yachcha tadachintasya lakshanam.

Meaning - "We are forbidden to speculate over inconceivable *bhâvs* or objects. 'Inconceivable' refers to whatever is beyond the material nature."

After all, we belong to this world. We come in contact only with objects that are transformation of Nature. Therefore while analyzing or debating, we use our material experience. As our intellect becomes transcendental, we will be able to absorb the knowledge of divine objects. Hence whatever the scriptures and the preceptors who have transcendental intellect have told us about the inconceivable, we should accept with respect and faith. We are forbidden to use material intellect in this regard. Those with material unclear intelligence try to use logic and analysis to diminish the inconceivable glory and power of the Holy Name; they verily commit a crime against Sri Nâm-Prabhu.

The Seventh Offense - *nâmno balâd yasya hi apapa-buddhirna vidyate yamairhi shuddhih* -

Meaning - "If one thinks he can commit an offense on strength of the Holy Name – even if he performs innumerable penances and undergoes untold suffering in hell – he will not get rid of his offense."

Explanation – We know that our sins are destroyed when we chant the Holy Name; now if we use this knowledge to think – "Oh, I can continue to commit sins, because after all, I am chanting and the Holy Name will destroy my sins" – then we are offending Sri Nâm-Prabhu.

It is true that to destroy mountainous sins is but a child's play for Sri *Harinâm;* yet we are supposed to take His shelter to achieve the topmost goal – eternal love or to make Sri Krishna happy by obtaining His *sevâ*. Now if we resort to the Holy Name to commit hateful sins, it means we are displaying audacity. Moreover this indicates that we are belittling the Holy Name, and consequently we are collecting offenses that are millions of times more dangerous than sins. As a result, even if we perform penances and suffer terrible punishments in the hell, our *chitta* is not cleansed.

Here we should note the point that, when we take the shelter of the Holy Name with a pure intention, forget committing sins, we will not be interested even in pious activities. Therefore the one who has sought refuge of the lotus feet of Sri *Harinâm* will never dream of committing a sin. When we have some *aparâdh*, then our chanting is called '*nâmâbhâs*' (shadow of the Holy Name) and not 'pure *nâm'.* Even *nâmâbhâs* annihilates past sins and wipes out the tendency to sin. Even then, some sinful reactions do remain. In this state, if a *sâdhak* thinks that he can continue to sin on the strength of the Holy Name he commits a horrible *nâm aparâdh*.

The Eighth Offense -

"*dharma-vrata-tyâga-hutâdi sarva-shubha-kriyâ-sâmyam-api-pramâdah"*

Meaning - "It is an offense to equate the result of the Holy Name with the outcomes of righteous conduct, penance, sacrifices, and other religious activities.'

This belittles the glory of the Holy Name, hence an offense. All the pious activities listed in the scriptures are material in nature, whereas the divine name is transcendental and indestructible. The pious activities are merely the means to attain heavenly comforts. They cannot be the goal. On the other hand, the Holy Name reaches us to the goal (eternal love) and is also the goal itself. Thus how can we consider any good act equal to *Harinâm*? In fact, the good acts merely grant us some miniscule fruits. If we pray to the Holy Name for the same results – we commit an offense, since this means we are equating the Holy Name with those pious activities.

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has said –

"Sri *Harinâm* is independent and all-powerful. If we engage Him to bestow those small products that *karmas* can give us, we are insulting Him. It is an offense."

– (purport to Srimad-Bhâgavatam 6.2.10-22)

The Ninth Offense – *ashraddadhâne vimukhe'pi shrinvati yashchopadeshah shiva-nâmaparâdhâ* –

Meaning - "It is an offense to instruct one to chant *Harinâm* if he is irreverent and is averse to hearing the Holy Name."

Faith and reverence are the prime requisites to enter the *Bhakti-Mandir.* Therefore only one who has *shraddhâ* is qualified to chant the Holy Name. If we meet someone who has no respect for the Lord and is not interested to know the glory of the Holy Name we should not instruct such a person to chant. We should simply say – "*Harinâm* is above everything, it is the supreme most and if we chant the Holy Name all will benefit". It is better to speak like this than directly saying – "You should chant the *Mahâmantra*." We should give *Harinâm* only after we have tested that person's faith. Otherwise we shall commit offense. **The above verse states that if we instruct a faithless disrespectful person to chant, we are the offenders – and not the other person (who odes not respect the Holy Name)**.

The Tenth Offense –

"*shrute'pi-nâm-mâhâtmye yah pritirahito narah,*
aham mamâdi paramo nâmni so'pâparâdhakrit."

Meaning - "In spite of hearing the glory of Sri *Harinâm*, if we continue to think of the body as 'I' and body-related objects (persons) as 'mine' – and do not love the Holy Name – we commit an offense."

This statement refers to the one who is being instructed to chant. When a devotee preaches the Holy Name to someone and if that person does not start chanting, he is committing an offense. When is it that we do not want to chant? When we take pride in our body that is highly destructible and consider ourselves the lord and master of material possessions. It is then that we disregard the Holy Name and do not start chanting. In spite of hearing the vast greatness of the Holy Name when we do not chant it means that we are insulting Sri Nâm-Prabhu. A devotee too should not instruct such a person to chant.

The result of offense less chanting

The saints and scriptures ordain that we should chant the Holy Name without committing these ten offences. The only way we can chant without offending is to obey Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu's command – to be more humble than a blade of grass. However, if we can really put this to practice, Sri Nâm-Prabhu will certainly grace us with His bounties and we shall feel blessed. And this will happen extremely quickly.

How can we obliterate *Nâm-aparâdh*?

Padma Purân has stated –

"We can annihilate *Nâm-aparâdh* by resorting to chanting alone. We should chant without resting for a single moment – then we can destroy *Nâm-aparâdh*."

However if we offend a great soul, then we have to beg him to forgive us; when he is pleased, our *aparâdh* is destroyed. What happens if we are unable to please him? Then we have to chant all day and night, and then it will be possible to wipe out that offense. We can burn the other offenses by repenting and chanting incessantly.

How to find out if we have *aparâdh* or not?

We may ask – "I have not committed a single offense, and I am chanting with respect; then how come Sri Nâm-Prabhu is not showering His blessings on me?" The answer to this query is the same – "*aparâdh"*. There is nothing that can stop the grace of the Holy Name other than offense. Although knowingly we do not commit an offense – it is true, yet we cannot proclaim to be completely free of *aparâdh*. We cannot guarantee that we do not have any offense collected over the past lives; also we do commit offenses unwittingly, do we not? **However there is one solid way we can discern whether or not we have 'offenses'.** After having chanted a lot many times, we should peep into our hearts. Am I feeling joyous? Have I got tears and goosebumps? If the answer is 'no', then we should accept that offenses have made our hearts rock-hard. In spite of chanting many times,

when *prem* does not appear in our hearts, it is a sure sign of *nâm-aparâdh*. Srimad-Bhâgavatam proves this point –

"*tadshmasâram hridayam vatedam yad-grihyam-ânair-harinâma-dheyaih,*
na vikriyetâtha yadâ vikâro netre jalam gâtraruheshu harshah."

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained this verse as follows –
"When we chant repeatedly, yet we do not express tears, goose bumps and other symptoms of *bhâv*, it means that our heart has not melted with devotion. It implies that such a heart is hard like iron. This is a sign of *nâm-aparâdh*. Also, we cannot say that if we display tears and goose bumps, our heart has melted; for some people who have unstable emotions too express such tears and other symptoms without possessing any *bhâv.* They can do this with practice as well. The reverse is also true. Some very serious devotees do not express any sign of ecstasy although their *chitta* is full of *bhakti*. Hence this verse (from Srimad-Bhâgavatam) actually means –

'Even though one displays tears and goose bumps externally, if he does not have a heart that has melted with devotion, it means his heart is rock-hard. Although tears and goose bumps are the common symptoms of a change of heart, we should know that the real indications are the 'nine symptoms' such as forbearance, spending every moment in relation with Sri *Bhagavân* etc'.[1]

Two Types of Chanting

Anyway, whether we are offensive or non-offensive, it is our bounden duty to serve *Bhakti devi* by chanting with love and respect. If we are inoffensive, we shall attain *prem* and if we are offensive, we shall obliterate our offenses and after that, gain *prem*. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has instructed us to chant with love. He has said –

"We can chant the Holy Name in two manners –

1. just chant
2. chant lovingly

If we 'just chant' – that is, chant simply without any emotion, and if we are inoffensive we shall attain the divine abode. However if we chant with love we can get close to Sri *Bhagavân* and gain His *sevâ.*

The *Gopis* had met Sri Krishna in Kurukshetra. Then He had extolled their love by saying – 'Dear Braja-beauties, living beings become immortal because of their devotion unto me. Your love forces me to come near you' – (S.B.10.81.31)"- (Krama-Sandarbha purport to S.B.6.2.20)

These divine words prove that love is the best way to drag Sri Krishna to us. Similarly if we chant lovingly, the Holy Name will surely manifest Sri Krishna before us.

How to chant with love

If we exclusively love the Holy Name then we should call out the *Mahâmantra* with intense longing. With how much passion should we call out our beloved *Harinâm*? Srila Sanâtan Goswâmipâd has given a wonderful example (B.B.2.3.167) –

"With how much longing the thirsty *châtaks* call out when it does not sight any cloud during the monsoon, with how much passion the *chakravâki* laments out of separation from her lover at night – a devotee, suffering in the pangs of *viraha,* and writhing with an agitated soul, should loudly and thirstily call out his Beloved".

If we understand the meaning of the *Mahâmantra*, relish it and then chant the Holy Name, we shall very soon gain the blessings of Sri Nâm-prabhu and start loving Him.

What does the *Mahâmantra* mean?

Nâmâchârya Thâkur Sri Haridâs has given a most wonderful explanation of the *Mahâmantra*. The devotees of Lord Goursundar will surely relish it.

[1] Please refer the section called '*bhâv'* in 'A Scientific Study of Bhakti'.

"ekdin haridâs nirjone boshiyâ,
mahâmantra jope harshe premâbishto hoiyâ.
hâshe kânde nâche gay gorje huhunkâr,
âchârjya gosâi âsi kore namaskâr.
sankoch pâiyâ hoilo bhâlo sambaran,
achârje pranami tiho arpilo âsan.
boshiyâ âchârjya gosâi kore nibedan,
ek boro samshay mone koroho chhedan.
kalijuge abatâr srikrishna-chaitanya,
chaitanya bhajaye jei sei boro dhonno.
tumi hao chaitanyer pârshad pradhân,
sri-krishna-chaitanya chhadi keno gâo ân?
athabâ ki marma jâni premânande bhâsho?
sarba jeebe harinâm koile upadesho.
nibedoy haridâs kori karajode,
sarba-tatta-betta tumi keno puchho more?
ki ba chhol âcharoho pâmor shodhite,
nibedan kori shuno jâhâ loy chitte.
kalijuge sri-krishna-chaitanya gudho abatâr,
koti samudra gambhir nâm tâm leelâ jânr.
guru-bhâbe korây tinho âponâ jojone,
harinâm Mahâmantra dilo sarbajane.
sri-krishna-chaitanya kalijug abatâr,
harinâm Mahâmantra juga-dharma sâr.
Mahâmantre sri-krishna-chaitanya bhinno kobhu noy,
nâm nâmi bhed nâhi sarba shâstre koy."

Meaning - "One day Haridâs Thâkur was sitting in a secluded place, absorbed in chanting the *Mahâmantra*. He was chanting joyously with love. He was laughing, crying, singing and roaring with a deafening noise. Just then Adwaita Âchârya entered and paid obeisance. An embarrassed Thâkur Haridâs immediately controlled himself. He returned the obeisance and offered the Âchârya a seat. Adwaita Prabhu sat down and requested Haridâs Thâkur to solve his doubt. He said – 'Sri Krishna Chaitanya is the Lord God in *Kaliyug*, so naturally whosoever worships Him is blessed. You are the foremost of all the associates of the Lord. Then why do you forsake the Holy Name of Sri Krishna Chaitanya and sing some other name? And what is your realization that makes you float in blissful *prem?* When the Holy Name of Sri Krishna Chaitanya *Mahâ*prabhu is the topmost, then why did you instruct all living beings to chant *Mahâmantra*?'

Thâkur Srila Haridâs humbly folded his palms and replied – 'You are the 'Knower of Truth'; then why do You ask me? You are only pretending not to know anything, simply to teach the fallen souls. Anyway, I shall do as You like. It is true that Sri Krishna Chaitanya is the secret *avatâr* in *Kaliyug* and His divine pastimes are as deep as innumerable oceans. He takes on the role of the Spiritual Master and makes us worship Him. That is why He has given everybody *Harinâm-Mahâmantra.*

Sri Krishna Chaitanya is the Lord God in *Kaliyug* and He has given us *Harinâm-Mahâmantra* that is the essence of this age. The *Mahâmantra* is in no way different from Sri Krishna Chaitanya, since all the scriptures declare that *nâm* is non-different from *nâmi."*

Then Thâkur Srila Haridâs illuminated every word of the *Mahâmantra* for our relish –

"**Hare** – She Who is the daughter of Vrishabhânu and is the crest-jewel of all the beloveds of Sri Krishna, has now descended as Sri Chaitanya, hence He is 'Hare'.

Krishna – Srimad-Bhâgavatam glorifies Him as the 'Son of Nanda' **–** that 'Krishna' has now appeared as this Chaitanya Gosâi.

Hare – He stole everything[1] from Braja and descended in Nadia; hence this name 'Hare' for Sri Krishna Chaitanya is most apt.

Krishna – He attracted the hearts of all living beings and sowed the seed of *bhakti,* hence the name 'Krishna' indeed belongs to Him.

Krishna – He is 'Krishna' within and without, and His entire being is absorbed in the sound vibration of 'Krishna' – therefore we conclude He is 'Krishna'.

Krishna – He assumed the garb of a *sannyâsi* and attracted the atheists – thus He is definitely 'Krishna'.

Hare – Gouranga steals the hearts and souls of the devotees with His extraordinary sweetness – this is the significance of His name 'Hare'.

Hare - He steals the hearts of His devotees so that He can steal their hearts in return – for this reason Sri Chaitanya is named 'Hare'.

Hare – Lord Krishna stole His Own sweetheart's *bhâv* and effulgence, and descended on earth – so Sri Krishna Chaitanya, Who is the essence of *Kaliyug* is 'Hare'.

Râm – The Divine Couple unite with each other and thus wander in Nabadweep in supreme pleasure, therefore Sri Chaitanya is 'Râm[2]' in this *Kaliyug.*

Hare – Sri Chaitanya steals all the inauspicious qualities from the living beings, as a result, His name 'Hare' is most propitious.

Râm – He love-sports in the hearts of His devotees, hence He has the name 'Râm'.

Râm – He is passionately aroused to relish Himself, therefore Sri Chaitanya has the name 'Râm'.

Râm – Lord Chaitanya manifested His form of Sri Râm Who is the Son of queen Kaushalya and had appeared in the *Tretâ yug* – consequently He is 'Râm'.

Hare – He stole Haridâs Thâkur's heart with His sweetness; hence He got the name 'Hare'.

Hare – He stole His own heart with His own sweet *bhâv* and became like a tortoise. As a result He became famous in the world as 'Hare'.

I have revealed the most confidential meaning of *Harinâm,* something that none of the scriptures can even dream about."

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd explains the *Mahâmantra*

sarva-cheto harah krishnasttasya chittam haratyasou,
vaidagdhi sâravistârairato râdhâ harâ matâ.1.

"Sri Krishna steals everyone's heart, while Srimati Râdhârâni steals His heart with Her intense *vaidagdhi* – hence She is called 'Harâ' and addressed as 'Hare'."

karshati sweeya lâvanya-murali-kala-nihswanaih,
sri-râdhâm mohana-gunâlankritah krishna irshyate.*2.*

"He drags Srimati Râdhârâni with His *lâvanya* and sweet vibrations of the flute – hence That mesmerizing One is called 'Krishna[3]'."

shruyate neeyate râse harinâ harinekshanâ,
ekâkini rahahkunje hareyam tena kathyate.3.

[1] He emptied the Brijwâsis' hearts and stole the most precious jewel of Braja, that is, Sri Râdhâ-*bhâv* and Srimati Râdhârâni's splendor.
[2] The One Who performs pleasure-sports
[3] Literal meaning of Krishna is 'The Supreme Attractor'.

"We have heard that during the *Râs-leelâ*, Sri Hari steals Srimati Râdhârâni when She is alone and takes Her in a secluded *kunja.* Since She is 'the stolen one' – She is 'Harâ'."

angashyâmalimastomaih shyâmalikritakânchanah,
ramate râdhayâ sârdhamatah krishno nigadyate.4.

"He turns the color of gold into dark green with His blue splendor; this means He makes the golden-complexioned Sri Râdhâ look dark green when He makes love to Her – so He is 'Krishna'."

kritvâranye sarah shreshtham kântayânumatastayâ,
âkrishya sarvateerthâni tajgyânât krishna irshyate.5.

"With the permission of His beloved Srimati Râdhârâni, He attracted all the holy places in Vrindâban and created a great lake (Shyâmkund) – so He is 'Krishna'."

krishneti râdhayâ premnâ yamunâtatakânanam,
leelayâ lalitashchâpi dheeraih krishna udâhritah.6.

"Sri Krishna is attracted by Srimati Râdhârâni's love and He laments in the gardens on the banks of the Yamunâ in *dheer-lalita bhâv* – therefore the wise call Him 'Krishna'."

hatavân gokule tishthannarishtam dushtapungavam,
sriharistam rasâduchchairgâyatiti harâ matâ.7.

"Sri Hari kills the evil Arishtâsur in Braja and Srimati Râdhârâni extols Him loudly as 'Hari' in a mood full of *ras* – so She is 'Harâ'."

hasphutam râyati preetibharena haricheshtitam,
gâyatiti matâ dheererharâ rasa-vichakshanaih.8.

"She glorifies Sri Hari's activities openly with love, so the wise connoisseurs of *ras* call Her 'Harâ'."

Srila Raghunâth dâs Goswâmi's relish of the *Mahâmantra*

Srila Raghunâth dâs Goswâmi has revealed a supremely enjoyable meaning of the *Mahâmantra* and Srila Shibânanda Sen's son Sri Chaitanya dâs has traslated it in the form of a poem in simple Bengali. **Since Srila Dâs Goswâmi is in Manjari-*bhâv*, Swaminijiu has revealed to him Her Own rendering of the *Mahâmantra* !!!** We present the English translation here. Srimati Râdhârâni is saying -

O **Hare**[1] - You reveal Your bewitching form and steal my eyes and heart with Your sweetness,
O **Krishna -** You are the abode of joy and You are most attractive, I can see none but You.
O **Hare** - You shatter my self-control, fear of the elders and family-honor,
O **Krishna -** You drag me with the notes of Your flute and make me forget my body and everything related to it.
O **Krishna -** You shock me by tugging at my bodice and pulling me close,
O **Krishna** - You touch my breasts under so many pretexts and are always restless because of Your *anurâg* for me.
O **Hare -** You steal me and take me to the flower-grove where You beg to make love to You,
O **Hare -** then the very next moment You steal my secret clothes[2] and express Your deepest longing.
O **Hare -** You take pleasure in first stealing my clothes and then stealing (breaking) all the barriers in my heart,
O **Râm -** You look so pleasurable, and moreover You express so much *vaidagdhi* and ultimately You always fulfill Your desire.

[1] Hari = One Who steals. When we address 'Hari', the word changes into Hare.
[2] Inner garments

O **Hare -** No one is more eager or expert then You in stealing the hairline on my midriff, and You also steal all my aversion to love-making,
O **Râm –** after this You reveal so many arts of love-making and make me float in *ras.*
O **Râm -** Your pleasure-sports are most delightful and I lose myself in Your joy,
O **Râm -** Whenever I think of You making love to me, Your handsome *ras*-form reveals in my mind's eye.
O **Hare -** There is no limit to Your stealing!! How You steal my very consciousness and make me forget everything!
O **Hare -** You steal my bosom like a lion and I have none but You.

You are my soul and I do not know anyone else other than You. In Your *viraha* even one moment appears like hundreds of *kalpas.* And You, on the other hand, go far from me like one so unfeeling – tell me what do I do?

O **Nava-Ghana-Shyâm[1]-** You are a repository of pure *ras,* my heart bleeds without You - how do I stay alive?

Poet Chaitanya dâs says – "Do not worry the one who has so much *anurâg* will surely get Her Beloved very soon." - (Padakalpataru)

[1] One Who resembles a fresh cloud

Raganuga-Bhakti-Vigyaan

What is *Râgânugâ bhakti*?

We have learnt about *sâdhan-bhakti* in the chapter 'A Scientific Study of Bhakti '. *Sâdhan-bhakti* is of two types -

- *Vaidhi*
- *Râgânugâ*

Vaidhi bhakti is when we perform *bhakti* because of scriptural injunctions, while *Râgânugâ bhakti* has only one qualification – greed. When we are greedy for Sri Krishna-*prem* and this is the sole reason why we practice *bhakti* then we call it *Râgânugâ bhakti.*

When we practice *bhakti* following in the footsteps of *Râgâtmikâ* devotees we can say we are performing *Râgânugâ bhakti*. Hence if we want to know about *Râgânugâ bhakti*, first of all we have to learn what *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* is. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has define *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* as follows -

"*ishte swârasiki râgah param-âvishtatâ bhavet,*
tanmayee yâ bhaved-bhaktih sâtra râgâtmikoditâ."

Meaning - "When we have natural loving and extremely strong thirst for Sri Krishna and it makes us supremely absorbed in Him – it is called '*râg';* that *râg-bhakti* is '*Râgâtmikâ bhakti*.'" – (B.R.S.)

"Very loving and strong thirst for Sri Krishna is the primary (main) characteristic of *râg-bhakti* while absorption in Him is its secondary characeristic." – (C.C.Madhya.22.86)

'Very strong thirst' indicates that we feel an intense desire to please Sri Krishna with our *sevâ* – this is the main characteristic. This immense greed makes us supremely absorbed in Sri Krishna - this is the secondary characteristic of *râg-bhakti.*

When we are completely absorbed in something, we lose touch with the external world, since we only think about how to make the ever-sportive Sri Krishna happy? How to serve Him according to our *bhâv*? In this state we are only concerned with His *sevâ* – nothing else enters the heart of a devotee. '*Swârasiki'* means the devotee has an intense greed to serve Sri Krishna and make Him happy by serving Him according to the *ras* that he possesses. For example - if the devotee is in parental *ras* he treats Sri Krishna like a child and has an immense longing to make Him taste that *ras.* The devotee's desire to make Sri Krishna happy is so enormous that he is absolutely immersed in Him. This is *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* and it is present completely in the eternal associates of the Lord in Braja dhâm – in fact it is present only in Braja dhâm and never outside Braja.

"The *bhakti* that is present openly in the Brijwâsis[1] is '*Râgâtmikâ bhakti'*; when someone practices devotion following in the footsteps of *Râgâtmikâ bhakti*, then we call it *Râgânugâ bhakti.*" – (B.R.S.)

"*Râgâtmikâ bhakti* is present chiefly in the Brijwâsis, and *Râgânugâ bhakti* is that which follows in the footsteps of *Râgâtmikâ bhakti*." – (C.C.Madhya.22.85)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has stated the characteristics of *râg-bhakti* as follows –
"There are devotees who feel slight interest in *râg-bhakti*; however they have still not actually felt *râg-bhakti*. *Râg-bhakti* is like a radiant moon; when a little trace of the moonlight of the

[1] 'Brijwâsis' in the Bhakti-shâstras always refers to the eternal residents of Braj who lived when Sri Krishna manifested His pastimes on earth.

moon-like *râg-bhakti* falls in these devotees, their heart dazzles like crystal. Then they hear from the scriptures about the wonderful *sevâ* that *Râgâtmikâ* devotees perform, and then they are interested to achieve the same. Here we should note the point that the devotee's heart should be clean – it should not be polluted with lust, anger, jealousy and the like. If such a devotee hears from the *sâdhu*s and the scriptures about the perfect *sevâ* rendered by the *Râgâtmikâ* devotees he becomes interested. Now with this interest, if he follows the footsteps of the *Râgâtmikâ* devotees, we can say he is performing *Râgânugâ bhakti*.

In this context 'hear from the *sâdhu*s and scriptures' means the devotee should hear about the loving *sevâ* performed by the Brijwâsis and how Sri Krishna relishes the *ras* of their *sevâ*. When the devotee hears and glorifies these pastimes his enthusiasm knows no bounds; just as when a moon ray disperses through a prism it looks all the more beautiful, similarly the hearing and glorifying enters the clear heart of a devotee and he becomes more joyous. Thus the devotee is enthused with interest in *prem-sevâ*. This induces him in the path of *Râgânugâ bhakti*. Here 'interest' means the devotee realizes that the *bhakti-shâstras* that reveal the *bhâv* of the eternal Brijwâsi associates of Sri Krishna as the best for hearing and he wants to follow those instructions only. This happens when the devotee has past *sanskâr* in this field. From the very beginning the devotee is greedy for Sri Krishna-*sevâ* (please note: only that kind of *sevâ* which the Brijwâsis do) and does not practice *bhakti* simply because the scriptures order us to do so.

"*Râgâtmikâ bhakti* is full of pure loving service. Some rare fortunate person is tempted by hearing about it and then he follows in the footsteps of the eternal Brijwâsi associates. A *Râgânugâ* devotee does not practice *bhakti* just because of scriptural injunctions." – (C.C.Madhya. 22.87-88)

It is true that when we feel tempted, we do not care for scriptural injunctions; however if we want to gain His *sevâ* it becomes necessary to follow the processes prescribed by the *bhakti-shâstras.*

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has ordained –

"When we hear about the sweet *bhâv* of the Brijwâsis we feel tempted; we do not care whether the scriptures tell us to practice *bhakti* or do not tell us. If we want to practice *bhakti* simply because the scriptures order us to do so we cannot say we were greedy for *sevâ*."
– (Râg-vartma Chandrikâ)

However if we want to achieve the topmost goal that is Braja-*prem,* then we must necessarily practice *bhajan* according to the rules prescribed in the *Râgânugâ* scriptures. This is because –

"If someone performs exclusive Hari-*bhakti* by rejecting the *shrutis, smritis*, purâns and the Pancharâtra – we find that he only creates trouble." (Brahma-Yâmal-Tantra)

Earlier we have mentioned something about 'interest'. Now the fact is that majority of the devotees do not have this interest in the preliminary stage. Yet, when they perform *bhajan* according to the rules of *bhakti* and they continue to hear about the *Râg-bhakti* of the Brijwâsis, they develop interest. Then they become *Râgânugâ* devotees. When we hear from the devotees who are always immersed in pure love then we quickly gain interest. We also strive to follow these devotees in the same mood as they possess. This means that if we feel greedy after hearing about the loving *sevâ* of the eternal associates who are in *madhur bhâv,* we too start practicing in *madhur bhâv*. *Râgânugâ bhajan* is the spiritual practice by which we can attain that same stage of love as those devotees whom we are following (the eternal Brijwâsis in the *madhur bhâv*). We have to follow scriptural rules in this process, since the *Râgânugâ* scriptures aim to tell the *Râgânugâ* devotees about the behavior of the eternal associates, and thus they inuse vigorous interest in us.

"siddhasya lakshanam yat syât sâdhanam sâdhakasya tat."

Meaning - "We have to practice to get all those qualities that they already possess."

When we really gain interest then the scriptures will follow us. It means that in the early stage

> If we see some devotee who has developed interest in *Râgânugâ bhakti,* yet his conduct is contrary to the *bhakti-shâstras,* then we should understand that he has not developed true interest or he is trying to gain something material and is only pretending to be interested.

of interest we should perform *bhajan* according to the rules and regulations prescribed in the scriptures, and after we gain complete interest, the rules follow us – this is the difference between early stage and mature stage.

Srimad-Bhâgavatam (2.1.7) says –

"e-aivâvihiteti keshânchit sangyâ,
ruchimâtra pravrittyâ vidhi-prayuktenâpravrittatvât.
na cha vaktavyam vidhyanadheenasya na sambhavati bhaktiriti."

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse as follows –

"*Râgânugâ bhakti* starts from the time we develop the slightest hint of interest. No one steps into *Râgânugâ* because the scriptures order so. Therefore some people call it *'avihitâ'* (not according to the rules). However the ones who step in the path of *bhakti* not caring for the scriptural injunctions – we cannot say that they are not practicing *bhakti*, because we see in Srimad-Bhâgavatam the following statement –
'O king, very often sages, who are beyond the rules prescribed in the scriptures, are immersed in relishing Sri Hari-*kathâ.*'

For this reason the *vidhi-marga* is weak since the devotees in this case practice *bhakti* because the scriptures order them to do so, while the devotees practicing *Râgânugâ bhakti* do so not caring for the scriptural order – hence it is much stronger – we should know this fact." – (B.S.310)

As soon as a devotee starts with *Râgânugâ bhakti* it makes him disinterested in anything other than *bhakti*. This is synonymous with greed. Srimad-Bhâgavatam states that when we bend towards Sri Hari-*kathâ* then it increases our interest gradually to such an extent that all topics other than Sri Krishna lose importance for us.

Now let us learn the various types of *Râg-bhakti*.

The Gradual Enhancement in *Râg-bhakti*

Although love for God is always great, it does depend on the devotee's identity and Sri *Bhagavân's swarup*. When the divine form expresses majesty and sweetness most completely to a devotee, then it means that the devotee's love for Him is also most complete[1]. Vrajendranandan Sri Krishna is *Swayam Bhagavân*. He is the only One Who manifests majesty and sweetness most completely and hence a devotee's love too is most complete when it is for Vrajendranandan Sri Krishna. Again love depends on how much sweetness a devotee can relish and the relation he has with Sri Krishna. In Braja there are four types of *bhâv* –

- *Dâsya* (servitude),
- *Sakhya* (friendly)
- *Vâtsalya* (parental)

[1] Although love is complete, some types of love are more complete than the others.

- *Madhur* (conjugal)

Amongst these *bhâv*, *sakhya bhâv* brings more pleasure than *dâsya bhâv*, *vâtsalya bhâv* is more enjoyable than *sakhya bhâv* and the relish is maximum in *madhur bhâv.*

We can classify *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* into two –

1. *sambandha-rupâ*
2. *kâm-rupâ*

A Brijwâsi[1] feels related with Sri Krishna and thinks – "I am Govinda's servant" or "I am Govinda's friend" or "I am Govinda's parent". This is '*sambandha-rupâ'*. In this the devotee serves Sri Krishna according to his relation. In *kâm-rupâ* too the devotee has a relation with Sri Krishna; however in this *bhakti* eroticism is so dominant that it deserves special mention. This is present in the Braja-beauties who are the source of *madhur ras*. Although they have a relation with Sri Krishna – that is – they consider Him to be their Beloved – however because their relation is extra-marital, their love is not bound by any particular name. Their love is so strong that it crosses all barriers and establishes a loving relation with Sri Krishna. Thus their love is incomparable in all creation. Although the scriptures refer to it as '*kâm'* (lust) it is supremely strong pure love or *prem.*

"The most dominant love of the fair sex of Braja is referred to as '*kâm'*. The dear and wise associates of Sri *Bhagavân* such as Uddhav crave for this sort of '*kâm*'." – (B.R.S.)

The *prem* of the *Gopikâs* is inexpressibly sweet and is called as '*kâm*'. It is entirely devoid of any desire for sense-gratification and although its external symptoms resemble '*kâm*' its aim is nothing but to make Sri Krishna happy. It is indeed an inconceivable mystery!

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written in Preeti Sandarbha –
"Braja-*Gopikâs* are in the mood of sweethearts. Therefore their activities resemble those of *kâm*; for this reason we call their mood as '*kâm'*. It is entirely different from the material lust (*smara)* caused by the Love-god. There are many differences between the two. Ordinarily 'lust' indicates desire, while '*prem*' means we are aware of what is favorable for the person whom we love and we do everything to that effect. Sri Krishna is the object of love and the *Gopis* do whatever is good for Him. Such feeling is *prem*. This is why although the external symptoms of both *kâm* and *prem* are almost similar they are extremely unlike one another. *Kâm* indicates selfishness whereas *prem* means we endeavor to do what is favorable for the one we love. Thus the pure dominant *prem* in the Braja-*Gopis* is referred to as '*kâm*' only because of external activities and we call their *bhakti* as '*kâm-rupâ'*."

We have already mentioned how *madhur bhâv* is the most enjoyable of all the *bhâvs.* Let us see why so.

In *dâsya bhâv* the devotee performs *sevâ* such as fanning, offering of betel-leaves, massaging of feet etc. In *sakhya bhâv* too we notice the same activities, however when a *sakhâ* defeats Gopâl in a game, He has to undergo punishment. Then He has to carry the *sakhâ* on His shoulder. Sometimes the friends tease Him by tugging at His clothes and at other times they offer Him food that they have bitten into. All these activities are not possible for a devotee in the mood of servitude. Thus we see that *sakhya bhâv* is higher than *dâsya bhâv*. *Vâtsalya bhâv* contains the activities of *dâsya bhâv*; however the parents scold and beat Sri Krishna, instruct Him about what is right and wrong, displays extreme care regarding His food and health. Thus *vâtsalya bhâv* is higher than *sakhya* and *dâsya bhâv*. Again we find that the activities of *dâsya*, *sakhya* and *vâtsalya* are all present in *madhur bhâv*. Over and above it contains activities such as winking or gesturing with eyes, gazing with longing in the heart, embracing, kissing etc. Such sweet activities are not

[1] 'Brijwâsi' always refers to the eternal associates of Sri Krishna in Braja dhâm.

present in the other *bhâv*. The Braja-beauties manifest these activities to the fullest degree. Therefore they are established on the highest pedestal in the empire of *prem*[1].

You may ask – the relish of a certain *bhâv* depends on the taste of the particular devotee – how can we judge the individual taste and declare *madhur bhâv* as the highest? After all, the judgment depends on the devotee, does it not?

We beg to answer – you are right; the devotee considers his *bhâv* to be the topmost. It is alright for one in parental mood (*vâtsalya bhâv*) to feel the parental mood to be the best. However if we analyze impartially then we can decide the degree of the taste. The one who has no *ras* cannot decide on topics regarding *ras*. Hence one who is a *rasik* (situated in his own *ras*), yet is impartial towards other *ras*, is the right person to make the judgment so as to which *ras* is the most relishing. Such a person is Uddhav Mahâshay. He was a devotee of *dâsya ras* mingled with *sakhya ras*. Sri Krishna sent him to Vrindâban to console the *Gopis*. When he arrived here he saw the remarkable exultation of *viraha* surging in the ocean of *prem* experienced by the *Gopis*. He realized the extreme greatness of *Gopi-prem* (*madhur bhâv*) and begged to become a blade of grass or at least a moss in Brajadhâm so that a speck of dust from the lotus feet of the *Gopis* would bathe him. We see this in Srimad-Bhâgavatam. This proves the superiority of *madhur bhâv*.

Our next question would be – if *Gopi-prem* is indeed superior, then why does everybody not aspire for *madhur bhâv*?

The answer is – Although *madhur bhâv* is the topmost, a devotee may be interested in the other *bhâvs* such as *dâsya*, depending on his past *sanskâr* or may be in this life itself he has gained the *kripâ* of some great soul who is in that *bhâv*. Let us understand this better.

Agreed that sweet dishes are more popular, they are considered the best; yet one may like sour, salty, pungent or bitter taste and not like the other tastes so much. It differs from individual to individual. Similarly although *madhur bhâv* is the topmost a devotee may not be interested in *madhur bhâv* and in stead be interested in *dâsya, sakhya* etc.

Of course all this is regarding the *sâdhak* only. The *Râgâtmikâ* devotees are situated naturally in their respective states. A *Râgâtmikâ* devotee is one who loves Sri Krishna infinite times more than he loves himself. The *Râgâtmikâ* devotees are bliss personified – just like Sri Krishna. They do not perform any *sâdhanâ*. As soon as they get Sri Krishna's *darshan* their past *rati* is exulted. Amongst all the *Râgâtmikâ* devotees the Braja-beauties are the highest and they are full of *Mahâbhâv*. Sri Râdhâ is the greatest amongst the Braja-beauties since the *Mahâbhâv* called *mâdan* is present only in Her. The *mâdan-Mahâbhâv* (or *mâdan-âkhy*[2]*a Mahâbhâv)* is the zenith of *prem*.

We can classify *madhur bhâv* (conjugal mood) into two types –

- *Swakiyâ* (bound by marriage)
- *Parakiyâ* (extra-marital relation)

Swakiyâ beloveds comprise of the 16108 queens of Dwârakâ. They are lawfully wedded to Sri Krishna according to the Vedic rites. They are always alert to obey His command and steadfast in the scriptural injunctions regarding chastity.

On the other hand, the Braja *devis* have rejected their dear ones and *Ârya-path* (the rules of the civilized society) – simply out of their extraordinary love for Sri Krishna. They serve Him in an extra-marital relation. The Braja *devis* are not bound to Him through any Vedic rites such as keeping the priest and fire-God as witnesses. They meet Him only because they love Him. Hence the relation they share with Sri Krishna is due to inconceivable love. They have had to forsake their relatives and the path of good conduct to establish this relation – they had to drown all the

[1] Their *prem* is the highest.
[2] Âkhya = called ; mâdan-âkhya mahâbhav = the Mahâbhâv called mâdan

rules of *dharma* and *adharma*. This is the pinnacle of *anurâg*. As a result their *prem* has reached the topmost height that is *Mahâbhâv*.

Only the Braja *devis* are in true *parakiyâ-bhâv*. Of course they are the personifications of Sri Krishna's *swarup-shakti* (internal potency) and hence they are His eternal consorts.

"*Parakiyâ bhâv* is the height of *ras* and it exists nowhere other than in Braja dhâm."
– (C.C. Âdi.4.47)

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd says – "When Sri Krishna relishes the exulted erotic *ras* that is heightened due to *parakiyâ bhâv* – He proves that He is indeed The *Rasik-Shekhar*." – (U.N.)

The wonderful distinction between Sri Krishna and other divine forms is His *ras*-exultation. Sri Krishna's potency *Yogmâyâ* who is an expert in making the impossible possible shrouds the intellect of the Braja *devis* and makes them forget that they are His eternal beloveds. She does this so that Sri Krishna and the Braja *devis* unite in ecstatic *ras* only due to extreme *anurâg* and not because of any social bonding. In this she enables both Sri Krishna and the Braja-beauties to relish the *ras* of *prem.*

(Sri Krishna is saying) – "*Yogmâyâ* will make the *Gopis* feel I am their lover (not married to them). I will not know this and neither will the *Gopis* and we will continue eternally to steal one another's hearts. We will forsake the path of righteous conduct and unite with each other. Some times we will meet and at other times we will not – it will depend on luck. I will relish all this essence of *ras*. Through this relish I will shower mercy on my devotees by describing the pure love of Braja dhâm. When the devotees hear this account (of the pure love of the *Gopis*) they will give up Vedic rules and worship me in *râg-mârga*." - (C.C.Âdi.4.29-33)

We already know the Râgâtmikâ devotees are in different types of *bhâv*; however Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu wants us to be *anugata* of a certain type of *Râgâtmikâ bhâv* – and which one is that?

Kâm-rupâ bhakti

We have already learnt that *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* is of two types –
- *Sambandha-rupâ*
- *Kâm-rupâ*

We can further classify *kâm-rupâ bhakti* into -
- *Sambhog-echchâmayi*
- *Tad-bhâvech-châtmikâ*

"When the *yutheshwaris* (group-leaders) such as Srimati Râdhârâni wish to please Sri Krishna with loving sports, their *bhakti* is called *sambhog-echchâmayi* (such *Gopis* are called '*nâyikâs*'[1]), while '*tad-bhâvech-châtmikâ'* refers to those *sakhis* whose only desire is to unite Sri Krishna with the *nâyikâs* such as Srimati Râdhârâni or Chandrâvali." – (B.R.S.)

These *sakhis* are concerned only about their *yutheshwari's* pleasure even when they are in Sri Krishna's company. They consider the pleasure of their group-leader as greater than their own happiness. Their pleasure lies in relishing the sweet joy arising out of their union. Therefore they never desire a physical relationship with Sri Krishna. When the *yutheshwaris* unite with Sri Krishna these *sakhis* derive so much joy that is many times greater than they would have gained from the physical association with Sri Krishna. This *bhâv* of the *sakhis* is so wonderful that it astonishes even the *nâyak*[2] Sri Krishna and the *nâyikâ*, so much so, that Sri Krishna and the *nâyikâ* too desire this special *bhâv.* Since this *sakhi-bhâv* is higher than the *bhâv* of the *nâyikâ,* it is called the 'chief *kâmânugâ bhakti*'.

[1] The heroine or central character of the love-sport.
[2] The hero of a love-sport.

"The nature of a *sakhi* is indeed remarkable; she does not wish to make love to Sri Krishna. She arranges the love-sports between Srimati Râdhârâni and Sri Krishna and gains innumerable times more pleasure out of it than from her own association with Him. Srimati Râdhârâni is like a wish-fulfilling creeper of Sri Krishna-*prem*, while the *sakhis* are its leaves, flowers and buds. When the nectarine love of Sri Krishna nourishes the creeper (Srimati Râdhârâni) then the leaves and flowers feel more joyous than they would have felt had they been watered directly[1]." – (C.C.Madhya.8.207-210)

"When Sri Krishna touches Srimati Râdhârâni, then Her *sakhis,* although they may be far from Her, express shivering, perspiration, goose bumps etc. that are the signs of ecstatic pure love; and when Sri Krishna very joyously drinks the nectar of Srimati Râdhârâni's lips then the *sakhis* express intoxication - this is a most astonishing event!" – (Sri Govinda-Leelâmritam)

These *sakhis* are as beautiful and talented as any *yutheshwari*. They are absolutely in charge of the love-sports, fun and frolic. They are Braja-beauties who are the caskets of erotic *ras*. Sri Krishna and His beloveds love them more than their lives. They extol Sri Krishna to His sweetheart and sing Her glory to Him. In this manner they arouse their passion for each other and arrange for Their *abhisâr* (secret meeting). They hand over the sweetheart to Sri Krishna, joke with them, console them, arrange their dresses, are experts at revealing the feelings of Sri Krishna and His sweetheart to the other, hide the *nâyikâ's* faults, instruct her so as to how she can cheat her husband and the elders, unite the *nâyak* and the *nâyikâ* at the right moment, offer the right *sevâ* at the right time, scold the *nâyak* and the *nâyikâ,* dispatch messages, restore the *nâyikâ's* life when she is in *viraha*, foil the plans of the opposite party – these are some of the *sevâs* of these sakhis.

These *sakhis* are of 5 types –

1. *sakhi*
2. *nityasakhi*
3. *prânsakhi*
4. *priyasakhi*
5. *param-preshtha-sakhi*

All these *sakhis* can be classified according to their nature as –

- *Vishama-snehâ*
- *Sama-snehâ*
- *Adhik-snehâ*

The *sakhis* who are *vishama-snehâ* love Sri Krishna little more than they love Srimati Râdhârâni – e.g. Dhanishthâ and Vindhyâ. The *sakhis* who sometimes exhibit little more love for Sri Krishna and at other times little more love towards Srimati Râdhârâni are *sama-snehâ*. E.g. *priya-sakhis* such as Kurangâkshi and *param-preshtha sakhis* such as Lalitâ and the Eight principle *sakhis* (popularly known as the *Ashta-sakhis*. *Prân-sakhis* and *nitya-sakhis* such as Kasturi and Manimanjari love Srimati Râdhârâni more and are called *Râdhâ-snehâdhikâ*.

Lalitâ, Vishâkhâ, Chitrâ, Indurekhâ, Champaklatâ, Rangadevi, Tungavidyâ and Sudevi are *param-preshtha sakhis*. Although they love Sri Krishna and Srimati Râdhârâni equally, they feel "we belong only to Râdhâ" – hence they reveal more love for Srimati Râdhârâni. It is a fact that they serve Sri Krishna only because He is Srimati Râdhârâni's Love and never as their own lover. Even though they make love to Sri Krishna – it is only to make Srimati Râdhârâni happy.

"Although the *sakhis* do not like to make love to Sri Krishna, Râdhikâ coaxes them to do so. She sends them to Sri Krishna under many pretexts since She derives much more pleasure from that than Her own association with Him. Srimati Râdhârâni and the *sakhis* express especially pure love and thus nourish the pleasure of *ras*. When Sri Krishna sees their love He feels satisfied." – (C.C.Madhya.18.212-214)

[1] If Sri Krishna would have directly made love to them.

The *param-preshtha sakhis* love Srimati Râdhârâni very much and this love ultimately culminates in Sri Krishna-*prem*. And although they express less or more love for Sri Râdhâ-Krishna from time to time – it is their way of manifesting love naturally and they do not do so voluntarily. It is possible that we have more love for one person yet show equal love for both. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd says –

"The *priya-narma sakhis* such as Lalitâ have immense love for Sri Râdhâ-Krishna, yet they express more love for Srimati Râdhârâni and at other times more love for Sri Krishna – this is the nature of the *sakhis*." – (U.N.)

The *visham-snehâ sakhis* such as Dhanishthâ love Sri Krishna more than Srimati Râdhârâni, but they do not have any *sakhi* following them. They are in a minority. There is no process of *bhajan* following their path.

Now the question arises which sakhis of Srimati Râdhârâni are the topmost? Naturally we would like to perform *bhajan* under their subjugation alone.

Manjari-bhâv

Sri Rupamanjari, Sri Ratimanjari, Sri Lavangamanjari etc are *adhik-snehâdhikâ* or *Râdhâ-snehâdhikâ*. They love Srimati Râdhârâni more. We call them '*manjaris'*. In all situations they relish immeasurable and inexpressible ever-new pleasure of *sevâ.* Although they do not expect any pleasure – all they desire is *sevâ* – yet it is the nature of *manjari-bhâv* and Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna's very confidential *sevâ* that they feel happy on their own. Their *bhâv* is so immense that even when they are close to Sri Krishna Who is Madan-Mohan; they retain their individual freedom and yet submerge Him in the ocean of joy simply by doing *sevâ.* Their *rati* is the only one of its kind; it reaches the height of wonder and becomes '*bhâvollâsa rati'*.

"When the *rati* of *sakhis* (for Srimati Râdhârâni) such as Lalitâ is equal or less than the passion for Sri Krishna, then we call their *rati* for Srimati Râdhârâni as the 'passing *rati'*, and that *rati* also nourishes their passion for Sri Krishna. However when the *rati* for Srimati Râdhârâni is more than the passion for Sri Krishna, and keeps on increasing due to constant absorption in that *rati,* we call that passion as *'bhâvollâsâ'*."– (B.R.S.)

This *bhâvollâsa rati* is the permanent *bhâv* of the *manjaris* such as Sri Rupamanjari. When we determinedly follow in the footsteps of the *manjaris* in this *bhâv* and perform *sevâ* then our *bhâv* is called '*manjari-bhâv*'.

> This *manjari-bhâv* alone is the 'hitherto unoffered' gift of compassionate Sriman-Mahâprabhu; Sri Rup and Sanâtan have practiced and preached this *bhâv* only.

Srila Narottam dâs Thâkur Mahâshay has written in his *Prem*-Bhakti-Chandrikâ –

"Do not follow the *sakhis* who are in the mood of *sama-snehâ* and *vishama-snehâ*; I shall discuss only the *adhik-snehâ* sakhis. They remain constantly with Srimati Râdhârâni and indulge in charming talks about Sri Krishna – they are the *narma-sakhis.* Sri Rupa-manjari is their leader while Sri Rati-manjari, Lavanga-manjari, Manjulâli, Sri Rasa-manjari and Kasturikâ are the chief *manjaris*. They serve with love, joy and enthusiasm. I shall follow them and ask them to engage me in the loving service of the Divine Couple. I shall understand what *sevâ* I should do by a mere hint from them. Bouncing with beauty and talents I shall follow them with deep love and stay amidst the *sakhis*. When the Divine Couple will sit surrounded by the *sakhis,* I will serve them at the right time. When the *sakhi* gestures I will fan Them with the fly-whisk and offer betel-leaf at Their sweet lips. I will meditate constantly on the lotus feet of the divine Couple with deep love.

Whatever I meditate upon during my *sâdhanâ* I shall get in my *siddha-deha* – this is the only process in the path of eternal love."– (P.B.C.)

A *Râgânugâ* devotee should take the shelter of the eternal associates such as Sri Rupa-manjari and surrender unto them; in this manner we should worship in *manjari-bhâv* (given to us by our Spiritual Master). We should be more enthusiastic about serving Srimati Râdhârâni than serving Sri Krishna and think of ourselves as Srimati Râdhârâni's very near and dear person. We may ask – 'All the scriptures proclaim Sri Krishna-*prem* as the topmost achievable goal, then why should we love Srimati Râdhârâni more than Sri Krishna?" The reply is that – Sri Krishna is controlled by Srimati Râdhârâni. When we love Her, we will attain Sri Krishna-*prem* much more and this will happen automatically. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has written –

"*vayam-idam-anubhuya shikshayâma, kuru chature ! saha râdhayaiva sakhyam,*
priya-sahachari ! yatra vâdhamantar-bhavati hari-pranaya-pramoda-lakshmih."

- (U.N.)

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained this verse as follows in his Ânanda-Chandrikâ purport –

Sri Manimanjari instructed a new *manjari* –"My dear clever girl, I am telling you from my own experience, it is better you make friends with Srimati Râdhâ. You may ask – why should I form a loving relation with Srimati Râdhâ? Rather, is it not better to establish a loving relation with Sri Krishna? No, it is not. I'll tell you why – please listen carefully. No doubt it is highly pleasurable to get Sri Hari's love; but if you love Srimati Râdhârâni deeply then that precious pleasure will present itself to you on its own. This is because love for Sri Krishna is included within your love for Srimati Râdhâ. Hence if you make friends with Her – it is needless to say that - a loving relation with Sri Krishna will form naturally.
When you become Srimati Râdhârâni's firm *sakhi,* then Sri Krishna will consider you as His beloved's dear friend and so He will love you all the more. He will not love you so much if you make friends with Him directly, however He will love you more if you love Her. So I am telling you if you can prove your love for Srimati Râdhârâni then Sri Krishna will love you even if you do not try for it. Sri Krishna is happier when our love for Srimati Râdhârâni is more than our love for Him. Also when Srimati Râdhârâni does *mân* or if the elders shut Her up in the house, then Sri Krishna will need you desperately to help Him meet Her. Then He will, on His own, run behind you to make friends with you. You see, you don't have to work hard to make friends with Him."

Especially if we wish to relish the sweet *ras* of Sri Krishna then worshiping the lotus feet of Srimati Râdhârâni becomes inevitable. Srila Raghunâth dâs Goswâmipâd has written –

"The one who has not worshiped the dust of Srimati Râdhârâni's lotus feet, has not taken shelter of Sri Vrindâban that is decorated with Her footprints, has not conversed with the great devotees who are deeply immersed in Srimati Râdhârâni's servitude, how will such a person ever relish the most mysterious fathomless ocean of *ras* that is Sri Krishna?" – (Stavâvali)

This is the sole reason why Sripâd Raghunâth dâs Goswâmicharan has rejected the position of Srimati Râdhârâni's *sakhi* and has begged Her to exclusively make him Her maidservant –

"O Devi Râdhike, to become a servant of Your lotus feet is the highest position; leaving this I do not desire anything else (such as the position of Your *sakhi*). I pay obeisance to Your *sakhi*-hood eternally, however please let me always remain rooted in the position of Your maidservant – this is my pledge." - (V.K.)

Srimati Râdhârâni's servitude is not a mean thing – it is the highest position or the most blessed status. Srimati Râdhârâni's maidservant is a servant in spite of being a *sakhi*. She has the right to

the entire sweet *ras*. First she relishes sweet *ras* and then she performs *sevâ*. Therefore Srimati Râdhârâni's servitude is overflowing with *ras*.[1]

Sometimes, by Srimati Râdhârâni's wish *sakhis* such as Lalitâ do unite with Sri Krishna, yet the manjaris never have aconjugal relation with Him. They are so much averse to it that even if Sri Krishna begs them for it and even if their group leader orders them to do so – the *manjaris* never ever have the slightest wish to make love to Sri Krishna in spite of such an activity being extremely joyous. Sri Vrindâban-Mahimâmrita says –

"The *manjari* is exclusively immersed in relishing the *ras* of serving the lotus feet of Srimati Râdhârâni, and she never accepts love-dalliance with Sri Krishna even in her dreams (definitely not when awake). When Sri Krishna forcibly tears her bodice and makes an advance towards her, then the *manjari* tearfully protests and laments – and beholding this scene - Srimati Râdhârâni, the Beloved of my life laughs.'

Even *sakhis* such as Lalitâ do not get the pleasure of serving the Divine couple in a manner that the *manjaris* can serve. We are fortunate to get such *sevâ* when we are completely surrender at Srimati Râdhârâni's lotus feet.

"I seek the refuge of Srimati Râdhârâni's maidservants headed by Sri Rupa-manjari – who can move freely and unhesitatingly in the sports ground of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna's love-making[2] - that even the *prân-preshtha sakhis* such as Lalitâ cannot – and they constantly please Srimati Râdhârâni, Who is the controller of Sri Vrindâban, with their sweet *sevâ,* such as offering *tâmbul,* massaging feet, offering water and helping in *abhisâr.*" – (Braja-Vilâs-Stav)

We, the Goudiya Vaishnavs, who wish to become Srimati Râdhârâni's maidservants, pray from the bottom of our hearts –

"When will I get the association of my *sakhi* and sew flower-garlands for both of Them? O when will I stand in front of them fanning Them with the fly-whisk? And anoint Them with *aguru* and *chandan*? When, on the command of the *sakhi,* will I offer *tâmbul?* And adorn Their foreheads with *sindur* and *tilak*? When will I behold their charming and loving pastimes with my eyes? And gaze at Their moon like faces after seating Them on the throne? I wish to relish that sweetness with all my heart – when will Narottam dâs get such mercy?" – (Prârthanâ)

Let us learn how to achieve this superlative state by practicing bhajan in *manjari-swarup.*

How to perform *Râgânugâ bhajan*

The Brijwâsis are the eternal associates of Sri Krishna and they have a very special *bhâv* for Him. When we hear about their *bhâv* and how they express it, if we feel greedy to achieve the same *bhâv,* then we are qualified for *Râgânugâ bhajan*. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd says this in B.R.S. –

"teshâm bhâvâptaye lubdho bhavedatrâdhikâravân."

He has also described in detail how such a qualified devotee should perform *Râgânugâ bhajan* –

*"krisham smaran janan-châsya **preshtha**m nija-samihitam,*
tat-tat-kathâratashchâsou kuryâd-vâsam vraje sada.
sevâ sâdhaka-rupena siddha-rupena châtrahi,
*tad-bhâva-lipsunâ kâryâ Braja-lokâ**nusâra**tah."*

Meaning - "We should meditate on our Beloved Sri Krishna and His Beloved, associate with devotees who are in the same mood as ourselves (*swajâtiya* devotee) and if possible, we should

[1] To know more about this topic please read Sri Vilâp-Kusumânjali and Sri Râdhâ-Rasa-Sudhâ-Nidhi edited by me.
[2] When Srimati Râdhârâni and Sri Krishna are performing confidential pastimes.

reside in Vrindâban in our *sâdhak*-body also. If we are incapable of doing so then we should at least live here mentally. We should take the shelter and surrender unto the Brijwâsi-devotee who is dear to Sri Krishna, and craving to get the same *bhâv* as that devotee, we should constantly perform *sevâ* in our *sâdhak-swarup* (externally) and in our *siddha-swarup* (mentally)." – (B.R.S.)

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained the above two verses as follows –

"In these two verses Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has explained the proper way to perform *Râgânugâ bhajan*. '*Preshtha'* (in the above verse) refers to our Beloved Sri Nanda-Nandan in His budding youth. We should worship Sri Krishna in this form alone, but at the same time we should constantly remember His eternal associates who have similar desire as we and we should reside in Braja dhâm in this manner. If possible we should physically live in some place in Braja dhâm such as Vrindâban etc. and in case we are incapable of doing so, it is our duty to live there at least in mind.

'*Sâdhak*-form' means the body that we are in at present, and '*siddha-deha'* indicates the body that is worthy of serving in the divine world, that on which we should meditate upon. In this divine form (*siddha-deha*) we should serve under the command of Sri Râdhâ, Lalitâ, Vishâkhâ, Sri Rupa-manjari and other *sakhis* who are very dear to Sri Krishna and they wish to relish the sweet *bhâv* of Sri Krishna. In the *sâdhak*-body we should serve following the instructions of the Goswâmis such as Sri Rup and Sanâtan. This signifies that in *siddha-swarup* we should perform *sevâ* mentally under the guidance of Sri Râdhâ, Lalitâ, Vishâkhâ and Sri Rupa-manjari, while in *sâdhak* body we should do *sevâ* under the subjugation of the Brijwâsis such as Sri Rup and Sanâtan. This is our duty.

Here '*anusâratah*' does not mean '*anukaran*' or imitation (we should not imitate the Goswâmis or the eternal divine associates), rather it indicates '*anusaran*' - which means – we should serve according to their command and following their *bhâv.*"

True, in *Râgânugâ* path meditating on the divine pastimes is the main *sâdhanâ,* however in the primary stage we are not qualified for *leelâ-smaran*[1]. Therefore we should concentrate more on hearing, chanting and following the other rules of *bhakti.* Then as our *chitta* gets more and more purified, we are drawn towards *leelâ-smaran*. Slowly our *smaran* becomes more intense. Ultimately when we reach the zenith of *bhajan, leelâ-smaran* naturally becomes the major part of *bhajan*. We should note that all the parts of *bhakti* mentioned in *vaidhi-bhakti* are useful in *Râgânugâ bhajan* also.

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd mentions this in the verse –

"shravanot-kirtanâdini vaidha-bhaktyuditâni tu,
yânyangâni cha tânyatra vigneyâni manishibhih."
- (B.R.S.)

Here hearing and chanting also includes accepting the shelter of Sri Gurudev's lotus feet and other fundamentals of *bhakti* as well. We should realize that all the rules of *bhakti* that we have already mentioned, and they are the parts of *vaidhi-bhakti* – we should stick to them in *Râgânugâ bhajan* also. If we do not obey the instructions of the Brijwâsi Goswâmis such as Sri Rupa Goswâmi, Sanâtan Goswâmi etc., how can we say we are surrendered unto them? Then how can we follow in their footsteps? The serious devotees should practice only those rules that are in accordance with their *bhâv* and never do what is contrary to it – such as *aham-grahopâsanâ*, *mudrâ*, *nyâs,* meditating on Dwârakâ, worshiping Sri Rukmini etc. Although the *âgam-shâstras* mention these processes of *bhakti,* a *Râgânugâ sâdhak* should not perform them.

Râgânugâ practice has two limbs – external and internal. External practice is done with our *sâdhak*-body, while we perform internal *sâdhanâ* by meditating on our *siddha-deha.* In the *sâdhak*-body we should hear, chant, forsake material pleasures, and serve The Deities with actual ingredients. We should meditate on our *siddha-deha* and serve Sri Krishna Who is our Beloved

[1] Meditating on the divine pastimes

with this body for only the *siddha-deha* is worthy of serving the divine Couple. We should seek refuge of Srimati Râdhârâni Who is the object of our love and surrender unto Her and Her dear ones. It is our duty to strive for that brilliant *ras* and following the instructions of Sri Rupa-manjari we should collect objects in meditation for internal *sevâ* and serve the divine couple as the time and situation demands.

"bâhya antar ihâr dui to sâdhan,
bâhya – sâdhak-dehe kore shraban kirtan.
mone – nija siddha-deha koriyâ bhâbon,
râtridine kore braje radha-krishner seban."

Meaning - "*Râgânugâ bhajan* comprises of two practices – external and internal. Externally, we should hear and chant, while we should meditate on our *siddha deha* and serve Sri Râdhâ-Krishna in Braja dhâm all day and night." – (C.C. Madhya.22.89-90)

But to meditate on the *siddha-deha*, first we have to know what a *siddha-deha* is.

What is *siddha-deha*?

'*Siddha-deha*' means the body that our Spiritual Master gives us and we meditate on it. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd says – '*siddha deha*' is the body that is worthy of serving Sri Krishna. Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has said – '*siddha-deha*' is the body that is worthy of serving Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna in reality (*sâkshât sevâ*). By using the word '*sâkshât'* he is indicating that when a *sâdhak* meditates on the *siddha-deha*, then Sri Krishna accepts the *sevâ* in truth. In *Râgânugâ* when a *sâdhak* has not reached the stage of *rati* (passion), then he deliberately meditates that he is serving the Divine Couple with *siddha-deha*; however when a *sâdhak* attains the level of *rati,* he identifies naturally with his *siddha-deha*.

The *siddha-deha* that the *sâdhak* meditates on is not imaginary. It is the supreme truth, eternal, blissful and conscious. Some people think that although the soul is originally spiritual, it is infinitesimally small; hence the *sâdhak* has to meditate upon an imaginary body. He pleases *Sri Bhagavân* by his *sâdhanâ* and then following the rule – "*yâdrishi bhâvanâ yasya siddhirbhavati tâdrishi*"[1] – Sri Bhagavân converts the *sâdhak's* soul into His associate. So the message is that, although later on the *siddha-deha* does exist (as Sri *Bhagavân's* associate), just now it is imaginary. This means, we are meditating on a make-believe image. This is not a Vaishnav-conclusion.

The *siddha-deha* of the *sâdhak* is a beautiful treasure of the eternal divine abode and it is permanent. All the *siddha-dehas* are conscious, blissful and is in the mode of especially pure goodness. We see in Srimad-Bhâgavatam –

"vasanti yatra purushâh sarve vaikuntha-murtayah."

Meaning - "Innumerable bodies are present in the divine Vaikuntha. They are parts of *Sri Bhagavân's* effulgence and are the precious and beautiful treasure of the Holy Abode."

Sri Gurudev is *Sri Bhagavân's* intense compassion personified. He knows our *siddha-deha* by the power of his meditation. Then he reveals to us our *siddha-deha*. We should meditate on this divine body and think "I am this divine body". Such meditation is called "meditating on *siddha-deha*". So we should note that our *sâdhanâ* does NOT create the *siddha-deha*. It is already there. When we accomplish success in *bhakti* and we become worthy of serving *Sri Bhagavân* in reality, we become blessed and get the opportunity to serve the Divine Couple in our *siddha-deha*. Hence it is imperative that we follow the *Siddha-pranâli* received in the *Guru-paramparâ* and perform *sâdhanâ* accordingly. We should meditate on that *siddha-deha* which we receive in *Sri Guru-paramparâ* and that which *Sri Gurudev* has given us.

Lord Sadâshiv has instructed us in Sri Sanatkumâr-Samhitâ how to meditate on *siddha-swarup* –

[1] On accomplishment of your *sâdhanâ*, you get the body and situation as per your meditation.

"parakiyâbhimâninyastathâsya cha priyajanâh,
prachirenaiva bhâvena ramayanti nijapriyâm.
âtmânam chintayettatra tâsâm madhye manoramâm,
rupa-youvana-sampannâm kishorim pramadâkritim.
âanâshlpakalâbhigyâm krishnabhogânurupinim,
arârthitâm-api krishnena tato bhogaparânmukhim.
âadhikânucharim nitya tatsevanaparâyanâm,
krishnâdapyadhikam prema râdhikâyâm prakurvitam.
prityanudivasam yatnâttayoh sangamakârinim,
tatsevanasukhâswâdabharenâti sunivritâm.
ityâtmânam vichintyaiva tatra sevâm samâcharet,
brâhmamuhurtamârabhya yâvat sântâ Mahânishâ."

Meaning - "The *Brajasundaris* who are in *parakiyâ-bhâv*, give immense pleasure to their Beloved Sri Krishna according to their *bhâv*. Similarly, you too consider yourself as a *Gopa*-maiden and serve in subordination to their *bhâv*. You are a maidservant amongst the *Gopa*-damsels. How will you meditate on this self? You will think – 'I am an extremely attractive maiden brimming with beauty, youth and sensuousness. I am a *Gopa*-girl and experienced in many arts regarding Sri Krishna's *sevâ*. I am Srimati Râdhârâni's eternal companion and follower.' Your loving *sevâ* lies in uniting Srimati Râdhârâni with Sri Krishna and your happiness lies therein.

If Sri Krishna ever begs you for love-making, you will refuse, since you are Sri Râdhâ's maidservant and you feel joy in making her happy. In this manner you will serve Srimati Râdhârâni eternally and love Her more than Sri Krishna. You will serve Her during all eight parts of the day[1] and unite Her with Sri Krishna. Thus you will submerge in the joy of *sevâ*[2]. You will serve right from the *Brâhma-muhurta* till the end of the night."

Those of us who cannot see the *siddha-deha* clearly, or do *leelâ-smaran* conspicuously – rather they even find it laborious – it is better if they are not over-enthusiastic about meditating on *siddha-deha* and practicing *leelâ-smaran*. It is better if they hear from the holy lips of the great devotees about the divine pastimes. Then they should read lots about the glory of *Gopi-bhâv*, repeat them and say *lâlasâmayi*[3] prayers that crave for such *bhâv.* They should try to practice very little *Gopi-bhâv* in the form of remembering and thinking. If they perform *bhajan* like this, then gradually they will be able to meditate nicely on their *siddha-deha* and they will be qualified to meditate on the pastimes of the Divine Couple. They will also be able to meditate on the loving *sevâ* of the Divine Couple in the correct manner.

Our *Sri Gurudev* gives us *siddha-deha* and along with it the *ekâdash-bhâv* (11 qualities of *siddha-deha*). Now let us learn about the *ekâdash bhâv* of the *siddha-deha*.

Ekâdash- bhâv or the eleven qualities of *siddha-deha*

"nâma-rupam vayo veshah sambandho yutha eva cha,
âgyâ sevâ parâkâshthâ pâlyadâsi nivâsakah"

Meaning - "The *ekâdash-bhâv* comprises of –

1. name
2. form
3. age
4. dress
5. relation
6. group
7. command

[1] The day is divided into eight parts called "*ashta-yâm"*
[2] This indicates that we should immerse ourselves in relishing the *ras* of serving Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna in Sri Vrindâvan constantly by meditating on our *siddha-deha*.
[3] '*lâlasâ'* literally means 'salivating'; here it indicates "extremely intense longing".

8. *sevâ*
9. *parâkâshthâ*[1]
10. protected maid servant
11. residence."

Now let us define each one.

1. **Name** – *sri-rupa-manjari-ityâdi nâm-âkhyânânurupatah,*
chintaniyam yathâ-togyam swa-nâma Brajasubhruvâm

Meaning - "The devotees who desire the confidential *sevâ* of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna in the secluded flower-grove in the form of a Braja-beauty, under the guidance of *manjaris* such as *Sri Rupa-manjari*, should meditate on her *manjari*-name."

2. **Form** – *rupam yutheshwari-rupam bhâvaniyam prayatnatah,*
trailokya-mohanam kâmoddipanam gopikâpateh cha

Meaning - "The *sâdhak* should meditate on her *manjari*-form which is as beautiful as any group-leader. Sri Krishna is so handsome that He hypnotizes the three worlds, however the *manjari* is so voluptuous that she arouses passion even in Him."

3. **Age** – *vayo nânâvidham tatra yattu tridashavatsaram,*
mâdhuryâdbhuta kaishoram vikhyâtam brajasubhruvâm

Meaning - "Although the age (in *madhur bhâv*) can vary from child to *pouganda*, the *manjari* is mostly at the sweet age of thirteen."

4. **Dress** – *vesho neela-patâdyaishcha vichitrâlankritaistathâ,*
swasya dehânurupena swabhâvah rasa-sundarah."

Meaning - "The *manjari* should dress beautifully in various colors such as blue, yellow etc. according to her look, nature and *râ*. She should also decorate herself with different artistic ornaments."

5. **Relation** – *sevya-sevaka sambandhah swa-manovritti-bhedatah,*
prânâatyaye'pi sambandhm na kadâ parivartayet.

Meaning - "Although one may have different relations with Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna depending on the tendency of the mind, a *manjari* mainly has the relation of *sevya* and *sevak* with Them. They will accept death, yet not forsake this relation[2]."

6. **Group** – *yathâ yutheshwari-yutha sada tishthati tad-vashe,*
tathaiva sarvadâ tishthed bhutvâ tadvasha-vartini"

Meaning - "A group always rallies around its group-leader; similarly the *sâdhak* should remain subordinate to the group-leader in his/her *manjari-swarup."*

7. **Command** – *yutheshwaryâh shirasy-âgyâm-âdâya hari-râdhayoh,*
yathoditâm tachchhushrushâm kuryâdânandasamyutâm

Meaning - "Sri Rupa-manjari is the leader of the *manjaris* – we should place all her commands on our heads (obey submissively) and serve Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna joyously according to her orders."

8. ***Sevâ*** – *châmara vyajanâdinâm samyoga pratipâlanam,*
iti sevâ parisegyeyâ yathâmati vibhâgashah

[1] The zenith (we shall learn more about this is the following explanation)
[2] This line of the verse may also mean – "even after dying they will not forsake this relation."

Meaning - "We should serve in the *manjari-swarup* according to our desire and instructions given by the senior *manjaris* – such as fanning, offering perfume, water, *tâmbul* etc."

9. ***parâkashthâ*** – *shri-râdhâ-krishnayoryadvad rupamanjarikâdayah,*
prâptâ nitya sakhitwancha tathâ syâmiti bhâvayet

Meaning - "We should have the firm faith that just as the earlier *manjaris* such as Sri Rupa-manjari are the eternal *sakhis* of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna, by following in their footsteps I too shall attain the topmost *bhâv* (zenith). In this manner we should meditate on our *manjari-swarup.*"

10. **Protected maidservant** –
pâlya-dâsi cha sâ proktâ paripâlyâ priyamvadâ,
swamanovrittirupena yâ nityâ paricharikâ

Meaning - "The *manjari* is so close to Srimati Râdhârâni that she reflects all Her emotions; in spite of this, she lives under the care and protection of her *Ishwari*. Also, she has multi-faceted talents and still she is *Swamini's* maidservant. This is her greatness."

11. **Residence** – *"nivâso Brajamadhye tu râdhâkrishna-shtale matah,*
vamshi-vatashcha sri nandishwarashchâpyati koutukah."

Meaning - "The *manjari* lives happily in Sri *Brajadhâm* – in places where the Divine Couple perform Their pastimes – such as *Vamshi-vat*[1], *Nandishwar*[2] etc."

When we desire *sevâ* in subjugation to *Gopi-bhâv*, if we have a pure heart, it softens and melts. When we are hungry we naturally find the food tasty; similarly the desire for *sevâ* makes us relish the sweetness of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna's *leelâ-smaran*. Those who wish to get *sevâ* following in the footsteps of *Gopi-bhâv*, only they can enjoy the sweetness of the divine pastimes. When the *bhâv* of a devotee is expressed in its entirety, we call it "*Gopi-bhâv*". We can relish Sri Krishna's sweetness to the greatest degree in this *Gopi-bhâv* alone.

What is the chief characteristic of *Gopi-bhâv*? When we are absolutely devoid of any desire for happiness for ourselves and endeavor only to make Sri Krishna happy – then we are exhibiting the chief characteristic of *Gopi-bhâv*. The *manjari*s display this characteristic to the greatest degree. The *manjaris* are ever absorbed in praying for *sevâ*. '*Bhâv*' is a mental state. Ordinarily '*bhâv*' refers to the equalization of the mind with the object of meditation. When we immerse ourselves exclusively in the pleasure of serving Srimati Râdhârâni and are completely absorbed in it, it is called '*manjari-bhâv*.' We, as *sâdhaks*, should worship in this *manjari-bhâv*.

Manjari-bhâv-sâdhanâ **has two forms of worship**

Sri Krishna's pastimes are of two types –
- manifested
- unmanifested

When material people can see the divine pastimes with material eyes, we call such *leelâs* as '*prakat leelâ'* or manifested pastimes. On the other hand, when the people of this world cannot see the divine pastimes, we call such pastimes as '*aprakat leelâ'* or 'unmanifested pastimes.' Both the *leelâs* are identical. The difference lies in who is able to see it and who is not. The unmanifested pastimes do not mix with worldly people and mundane objects, while the *prakat leelâ* is mixed up with the material world. Although the *prakat leelâ* is not subject to change – just like Sri Krishna's form that is always divine – it appears to have a beginning and an end. However

[1] The banyan tree on which Sri Krishna played His flute.
[2] Nandagrâm

these *leelâs* are not controlled by time and place – we should realize this. These pastimes too occur by His wish alone and His *swarup shakti* controls them.

"We can worship Sri Krishna's unmanifested pastimes in two ways – *swârasiki* and *mantramayee*" – (Sri Krishna-Sandarbha.153)

Mantramayee worship

Sri Krishna is present in *Yogpeeth* in different places. He is surrounded by His associates who are seated in various positions. When we meditate on them as such and worship them with *mantras* mentioned in the scriptures, we call it *mantramayee* worship. In Brajadhâm there are different places where the *Yogpeeth leelâ* takes place. In this worship Sri Krishna is present with His associates in one particular place and the entire worship takes place in this place only– therefore *mantramayee* worship resembles a lake with still water.

Swârasiki worship

Swârasiki leelâs are those pastimes of Sri Krishna that are according to our mood (in the case of a *Manjari* it is the sweet mood or conjugal mood). They do not occur at the same place and at the same time. They are without a beginning, middle and end. They are extremely variegated. Each pastime is unique. Different pastimes occur in different places and at different times. These *leelâs* resemble a flowing river.

"These *leelâs* take place as and when He wishes and differs from situation to situation."
– (Sri Krishna-Sandarbha, 153)

Just as a river may have lakes in between, the *swârasiki leelâ* (that is like a river) have the *Yogpeeth leelâ* (that resembles a lake) within it. When we meditate on these variegated pastimes throughout the day, we call it *swârasiki* worship.

How to perform *mantramayee* worship

Boudhâyan Smriti states the meditation in *mantramayee* worship as follows –

"govindam manasâ dhyâyed gavâm madhye sthitam shubham,
barhâ peeda-samyuktam venuvâdanatatparam,
gopijanaih parivritam vanya-pushpâvatamsakam."

Meaning - "Meditate on Sri Govinda in your mind – he is present in all, He is adorning a crown of peacock-feathers, ready to play on His flute, surrounded by the *Gopis* and His ear-rings are made of wild flowers."

Sri Gopâl-Tâpani Shruti too mentions *mantramayee* worship as follows –

"*Tada hovâcha – hairanyo gopaveshamabhrâbham tarunam kalpadrumâshritam. Tadiha shlokâ bhavanti –*

'satpundarikanayanam meghâbham vaidyutâmbaram,
dwibhujam mounamudrâdhyam vanamâlinamishwam.
gopa-gopi-gavâvritam sura-druma-talâshritam,
divyâlankâranopetam ratnamandapamadhyagam.
kâlindi-jala-kallola-sangimâruta-sevitam,
chintayech-chetasâ krishnam mukto bhavati samsriteh.'
'govindam sach-chidânanda-vigraham.' Iti.

Meaning - Lord Brahmâ said –"Sri Krishna is dressed as a cowherd boy, He is cloud-complexioned, adolescent and His eyes are shaped like lotus petal. He is clad in yellow dhoti, has two hands and is silent. He is wearing a garland of wild flowers and He is the Controller. Brilliant ornaments adorn Him and the *Gopas, Gopis* and the cows surround Him. He is seated on a gem-studded throne beneath a wish-fulfilling tree. The breeze blowing across the Kalindi River and laden with water droplets is serving Him. If we serve such Sri Krishna in meditation, we will be verily liberated from the material ocean. We should worship Him with words such as 'Govinda', '*sach-chidânanda'* etc."

Types of *mantramayee* worship

Mantramayee worship is of two types –

- *Yogpeeth* worship
- *Archâ-vigraha*[1] worship

We should perform *Yogpeeth*-worship in meditation according to the descriptions given in Sri Govinda-Leelâmrita, Sri Krishna-Bhâvanâmrita etc. Also Sri Govinda is Himself present on every altar in a silent form to accept the loving service from His devotees. When we serve Him with utmost love, He will give up His silence and instruct us how to serve Him better. He may speak to the devotee in a dream or when he is awake. However when Sri Krishna speaks to a devotee in the awakened state, it is extremely confidential and our preceptors have forbidden us to discuss this in detail – therefore such devotees have not recorded it in writing. Sri Hari-Bhakti-Vilâs is the topmost Smriti[2] have stated the guidelines regarding this form of worship.

How to perform *swârasiki* worship

Sri Krishna's *Leelâ-shakti* wants Him to enjoy various *leelâs*; therefore she manifests the right *leelâs* at his right time. The *swârasiki leelâ* enfolds the *mantramayee leelâ* in her arms[3] and is flowing in all it colorful variegatedness since eternity. During the *prakat-leelâ* (the pastimes that material people can see with mundane yes) when Sri Krishna leaves Vrindâban and goes to Mathurâ, then the associates of Braja are scorched with *viraha*. However even then, the *swârasiki leelâ* continues in a shrouded manner and it contains the *Yogpeeth leelâ*. But, although the associates do realize this, they do not accept this as real. Due to extreme *viraha*, they feel it is but a *sphurti*. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has said –

"Sri Krishna is always sporting with the *Brajadevis* in Vrindâban and performing loving pastimes such as the *Râs-leelâ* – they are never separated from Him." – (U.N.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this statement as follows – "These words certainly refer to the *aprakat leelâ* (the pastimes that cannot be seen with mundane eyes). 'Vrindâban' indicates the 'unmanifested Vrindâban'."

This means that Sri Krishna is always sporting with the Brijwâsis. There is no question of separation.

Padma Purân too states – "*go-gopa-gopikâ sange* ***kridati*** *kamsahâ"*
Meaning - "The enemy of Kamsa (Sri Krishna) sports with the cows, *Gopas* and *Gopis.*"

How the Goudiya Vaishnavs should relish the eternal pastimes

'*Kridati'* indicates the simple present tense. This means that Sri Krishna is always engaged in divine play in Vrindâban. Sri Brahmâ glorified Lord Govinda in Brahma-Samhitâ as follows –

"Vrindâban is an abode of gem-studded palaces and is decorated with innumerable wish-fulfilling trees. There He is taking care of countless Surabhi-cows. Hundreds of thousands of *Gopa* beauties surround Him and serve Him most lovingly. I adore That Primeval Being – Sri Govinda."

This verse proves *swârasiki leelâ.*

Sri Sri Nabadweep is non-different from Braja-dhâm and Sri Goursundar is the united form of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna. Therefore the Goudiya Vaishnavs should relish the sweetness of both these Holy places and assist the eternal pastimes in the form of loving devotees. As *sâdhaks* we should

[1] The Deity that we worship on the altar in our home
[2] Smritis mean "that which has to be remembered". Unlike the Vedas which are considered of divine origin, the Smritis are of human compositions which guide individuals in their daily conduct according to time and place. They list the codes and rules governing the actions of the individual, the community, society, and the nation. They are also called Dharma Shâstras or laws of righteous conduct.
[3] It mean that the mantramayee or Yogpeeth leelâ is a part of swârasiki leelâ.

at first perform *Yogpeeth*-meditation (*mantramayee* worship) in Sridhâm Nabadweep and worship Sri Goursundar along with His associates in the mind. When Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu is engrossed in *Braja-bhâv* along with His confidantes, we too should enter the *Yogpeeth sevâ* in *Manjari-swarup* and perform mental worship of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhâv surrounded by the *sakhis* (*mantramayee* worship). This continues into meditating on the various pastimes throughout the day (*ashta-yâm*) and we call this the '*swârasiki*-worship'.

"Whatever we meditate upon during *sâdhanâ*, we shall get in *siddha-swarup".* – (P.B.C.)

Following this rule the *sâdhak* is blessed by serving in both the *leelâs* in the eternal abodes in *siddha-swarup*.

"Here I shall get Sri Gourachandra and there Râdhâ-Krishna"

– (Srila Narottam dâs Thâkur *Mahâ*shay)

This is the most confidential truth of *Râgânugâ*-practice by those Goudiya Vaishnavs who are humbly surrendered unto Sriman-Mahâprabhu and the preceptors appointed by Him such as Sri Rupa and Sanâtan. In fact this is the path of bhajan revealed by Sriman-Mahâprabhu, and preached and practiced by His confidential associates.

Prem-Tattva-Vigyaan

What is *prem*?

'*Prem*' ordinarily means 'love'. We find this word overused in the material world. But what is really meant by *prem* or love?

"*hlâdinir sâr prem*"

Meaning - "Love is the essence of *Hlâdini shakti*." – (C.C.)

Love is the topmost manifestation of *Hlâdini Shakti*. *Hlâdini* is pure goodness and love is its characteristic. When we perform *bhajan* and we get Sri *Bhagavân's* blessing then our heart becomes clean. It is now ready to receive pure goodness. Then Sri Krishna flings *Hlâdini Shakti* into our heart. When we put an iron rod in fire, it gains the property of the fire – that is – it becomes red in color and hot to touch. Similarly our heart becomes one with pure goodness and gets its characteristics. Now pure goodness starts expressing its qualities through our mind. Its main quality is 'a desire to please Sri Krishna's senses'. This is love.

"*krishnendriya-priti-ichchhâ dhore prem nâm*."

Meaning - "Love is the desire to please Sri Krishna's senses." – (C.C.)

Sri Krishna's eternal associates always express the desire to please His senses. This means love is eternally present in them. When the *sâdhak's* heart is cleansed by hearing, chanting etc. then the same love flows into this material world like the river Mandâkini. It rushes down through the channel of devotees and manifests in our hearts.

"We can never get the everlasting love for Sri Krishna that His eternal associates possess by means of any spiritual practice. When our heart becomes clean due to hearing etc. it manifests itself." – (C.C.)

Now we can understand that although love does express itself in this world it is never worldly. Love is the characteristic of the transcendental inherent potency of Sri *Bhagavân – Hlâdini Shakti*. Therefore when we call worldly affection as 'love' – such as 'brotherly love', 'love for the society', 'love for the nation', 'love between men and women' – we are inflicting a grievous insult on the word 'love' – we can easily understand this.

In fact - "Lust and love are distinct from each other just as iron and gold. Lust indicates a desire to satisfy one's own senses, while love wants to please Sri Krishna's senses only. Lust wants only sexual satisfaction for own self, while love's strongest desire is to delight Sri Krishna."– (C.C.)

We can define 'lust' as the living being's material affection for each other where only sense gratification is involved. It is as cheap as a piece of iron for it is self-centered. On the other hand love is brilliant like gold because it wants to satisfy Sri Krishna. Lust stinks like hell for it smacks of sensual pleasure, while love is fragrant like the celestial garden Nandan-kânan because it is aromatic with the wish to please Sri Krishna. Lust is as dark as the New Moon night for it is so selfish, whereas love is self-luminous and as bright as daylight because it seeks to make Sri Krishna happy.

"And so we see that lust is very much different from love – lust is pitch dark, while love dazzles like the brilliant sun." – (C.C.)

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has written –

"When a *sâdhak* who is in the advanced stage of *bhâv-bhakti* – his heart is much more melted or serene as compared to when he was in the primary stage of *bhâv-bhakti* – and now he feels the

topmost supreme bliss – and he also feels strongly that Sri Krishna belongs to him – the wise call such a *bhâv* as *prem*." – (B.R.S.)

Difference between *bhâv* and *prem*

In the stage of *bhâv,* our *chitta* becomes clean while when we reach *prem* we are absolutely spotless. In *bhâv* we have profound interest in Sri Krishna, whereas in *prem* we are extremely possessive about Sri Krishna. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has quoted in Sri Nârad-Pancharâtra to prove this point -

"When we feel that our body, house and every other physical possession does not belong to us – and in stead consider Sri Vishnu alone as our sole possession – great saints such as Bhishma, Prahlâd, Uddhav and Nârad call this stage as '*prem*'."

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this verse as follows –

"*Prem* is a characteristic of *Hlâdini shakti*. Therefore *prem* is intensely blissful. This is its primary characteristic. *Prem* also has two secondary characteristics – a) our *chitta* is squeaky clean and b) we feel extremely possessive about Sri *Bhagavân*."

"Character and nature are the primary characteristics (of anything) and 'how it acts' is its secondary characteristic, by which we recognize it." – (C.C.)

Lets us now examine *prem* using the above principle.

What is the character and nature of *prem*?

Prem is '**very intense'** – this is its primary character and this is how we distinguish *prem* from *bhâv*. In the stage of *bhâv* we have lukewarm love for Sri *Bhagavân* while in *prem* it becomes extremely passionate. What is *prem* made of? The nature of *prem* is that it is the essence of *samvit* and *samvit* is the essence of *Hlâdini Shakti*. We have already mentioned it.

We can recognize something by its action. *Prem* has two secondary characteristics –

- it is spotlessly clean and
- it gives us a sense of possessiveness.

When we gain intense passion – that is we gain *prem* – our *chitta* becomes completely clean, and it melts. Our desires regarding Sri Krishna increases. We express external symptoms such as tears, goose bumps etc.

"If the heart does not melt, how come there are goose bumps? Without goose bumps how come there are tears of joy? Without tears of joy how is it possible that our *chitta* is cleansed?" – (S.B.11.14.23)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written in Priti-Sandarbha (69th chapters) –

"So we see that love results in melting of the heart which leads to goose bumps etc. Although our heart may melt somewhat and we may express some signs of ecstasy such as goose bumps and joy - yet if our *chitta* does not become clean, we should realize that Sri Krishna-*prem* has not manifested itself completely."

These statements prove that when we perform *sâdhanâ,* our heart becomes pure. Then *bhakti* appears in our heart. When *bhakti* appears in our heart then we become exceedingly eager for Sri *Bhagavân's darshan*. *Bhakti* is like blazing fire while the *sâdhak's* heart is like gold. The fire (*bhakti)* melts the especially pure gold (heart) – "*darshanotkanthâgnidrutikritachittajâmbunadah"* (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd) – in this manner when *prem* arises, the *chitta* melts completely and the *premik* cries, sings and dances in ecstasy.

Srimad-Bhâgavatam says (11.3.31 – 32) –

"When love for Sri *Bhagavân* appears in the devotees' hearts, he remembers Sri Hari Who destroys all sins. The devotees also remind each other of Sri Hari. Their *sâdhan-bhakti* ultimately results in *prem-bhakti* and they express goose bumps. They remember *Achyuta* Sri *Bhagavân* and sometimes they laugh and at other times they cry. Every now and then they speak of things that are out-of-this-world and at other times they dance and sing. By following in the path of Sri *Bhagavân* Who is without birth, they become supremely blissful and remain silent."

Sri Krishna-*prem* has another secondary characteristic - intense possessiveness about Sri Krishna. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained in Priti-Sandarbha (84th chapter) –

"Love results in extreme possessiveness. Although numerous circumstances arise that threaten to destroy love, it does not diminish and there is no decrease in loving behavior. Love is rich with possessiveness. We can see it in other scriptures as well. Mârkandeya Purân says – 'We feel so sad when a cat eats up our hen, since the hen belongs to us, whereas if a *chatak*[1] devours a mouse, we do not grieve, since it does not belong to us.' Therefore possessiveness is the sign of love. Nârad-Pancharâtra says – 'We can say we have *bhakti* when we feel that nothing belongs to us other than Lord Vishnu.' "

A discussion about the characteristics of love

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has discussed the characteristics of love in Priti-Sandarbha, 78th chapter. He has written –

"Now let us discuss the characteristics of love and what we conclude from them. Love for Sri *Bhagavân* is like a full moon that radiates the moon rays of supreme bliss, it is the essence of all good fortune in the creation and is the source of all goodness in the material world. It is full of ecstasy that constantly arises out of transcendental especially pure goodness. It is insurmountably pleasurable. Sri *Bhagavân* is so sweet – one can neither equal nor surpass His sweetness. Yet our love can madden Him completely and make Him dizzy with happiness. Circumstances cannot diminish Divine love and it cannot bring any change in the relation. It is a characteristic of condensed *Hlâdini.* Love only wants what is favorable for Sri Krishna and desires only Him. Love resides in the heart of such a devotee. Love is more *ras*-full than condensed *Amritam* and conceals its excellences from everyone, except the devotees. It is decorated with the pearl like tears[2] and contains all good qualities. Every single goal of life – how much ever precious or important it may be – is reduced to nothing in front of divine love. In fact when we accomplish love, nothing else remains to be attained. Love is entirely absorbed in serving Sri *Bhagavân* like a chaste wife. Its only job is to steal His heart. Love is the sovereign ruler because it serves Sri *Bhagavân* to the fullest extent."

Let us scrutinize Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd's description. It reveals the primary as well as secondary characteristics of love. We have already mentioned that primary characteristic comprises character and nature. They indicate what this substance is actually.

Character of love

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd says that love's character is – "*bhagavad-ânukulyâtmak-tad-anugata-tat-sprihâdimay-gyâna-visheshâkârâ"*. It means that love is knowledge. What sort of knowledge? We should have the knowledge of what is favorable for Sri *Bhagavân* – that is – what pleases Him and we should also know what *sevâ* we should perform so as to make Him happy. He has further clarified this point with "*tâdrishabhaktamanovrittivisheshadehâ"* – this means – when a devotee gains love he strongly yearns to please Sri *Bhagavân* and love is made up of such extreme longing.

Nature of love

Love is – "*hlâdinisâravrittivishesharupâ"* – a characteristic of condensed *Hlâdini shakti*.

[1] Name of a bird

[2] When a devotee has divine love, he sheds tears of love. These tears arise from extremely pure feelings and hence they are compared to pearls.

Now Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd is describing the secondary characteristics of love – *kârjyadwârâ gyân ei tatasthâ lakshan* – we learn the secondary characteristics of anything from the way it acts. Following are the activities of love.

1. *anapekshitavidhih* – Love for Sri *Bhagavân* (Divine love) does not depend on whether or not the scriptures instruct us to do so. Love is self-manifested.
2. *swarasata eva samullasanti* – Divine love is pleasurable due to its own *ras.* It is sweet on its own and does not require any external sweetener. This is because it is a characteristic of *Hlâdini.*
3. *vishayântarairanavachchhedyâ* – Divine love desires only to please Sri *Bhagavân* – nothing can deter it – the temptation for heaven, liberation or any other attraction.
4. *tâtparyântaramasahamânâ* – A devotee who has love always stays away from all desires other than Sri *Bhagavân's sevâ*.
5. *peeyusha-purato'pi sarasena swenaiva swadeham sarasayanti* – It is sweeter than a sweet with *Amritam*-filling; this means in Divine love sweetness is at its zenith. Also it keeps its sweetness intact on its own. It is blissful by itself. A loving devotee enjoys its taste and so this characteristic too is secondary.
6. *bhakta-kritâtma-rahasya-sangopana-gunamaya-rasanâ, vâshpamuktâdi-vyakta-parishkârâ* - This statement mentions a few ornaments[1] of Divine love. A loving devotee always tries to conceal himself – he never reveals to anyone the fact that he has gained love. This excellent quality is like a precious necklace dazzling around his neck. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has compared the tears of love shed by a loving devotee with gems and pearls. These ornaments make Divine love all the more attractive. Love makes the devotee want to conceal himself and makes him shed tears. This is a secondary characteristic of love.
7. *sarva-gunaika-nidhâna-swabhâvâ* – Divine love is naturally a repository of excellent qualities. Srimad-Bhâgavatam (5.18.12) says - "When Divine love manifests in a devotee's heart, he gains all good qualities."
8. *dâsi-kritâshesha-purushârtha-sampattikâ* – Even the most important goals of life seem like maidservants of love. Love is the topmost achievable goal, and all other goals are short-term – and they wish to serve love.
9. *bhagavat-pâtivratya-vrata-varyâ-paryâkulâ* – A chaste wife always longs to please her husband by her *sevâ*. Similarly when Divine love manifests in someone he constantly strives to perform *sevâ* and please Sri *Bhagavân*.
10. *bhagavân-manoharanaikopâyahârirupâ* – Divine love has only one function – to steal Sri *Bhagavân's* heart.

If we only know the course of divine love we will be able to realize how remarkable love is. This is why Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written – *'nikhila paramânanda-chnadrikâ-chandram'* and *'ananta-vilasamayâ-mâyika-vishuddha-sattvânavaratollasâd-asamorddha-madhure bhagavati'* – Sri *Bhagavân* is the only Object of love. Love is like a moon that scatters supreme bliss like the moon rays. In fact love is the source of all that is joyous. Love is a rumbling ocean of incomparable sweetness.

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has described the symptoms of love in his Mâdhurya-Kâdambini (8th shower of nectar[2]). Let us discuss in brief.

When we perform *sâdhanâ* we are attached to body, home and wealth. Love easily breaks these bonds and converts our material tendencies into transcendental. Thus love fixes our heart in His sweet name, beauty and excellences. Love is like a dazzling sun while all the goals of life are like the twinkling stars. When all of a sudden love arises in our heart, it forces other goals in our life to disappear. Love verily intoxicates the devotee. Then he becomes dynamic like a valorous warrior. He forgets himself like an extremely greedy dacoit who is all set to plunder. Then the devotee just keeps on relishing, and the more he relishes the greedier he

[1] Beautiful and brilliant qualities
[2] chapter

becomes. His thirst is ever-increasing. The more he drinks this nectar the more thirsty he becomes. Love and divine sweetness enhance each other extremely. Love takes the heart of the devotee in a realm of immeasurable relish.

Love creates an extraordinary strong agitation in the *premik's* heart; at the same time he also experiences a peace that sweetness brings. The two feelings are contrary to each other. The devotee wishes to meet Sri *Bhagavân* and his heart is torn apart due to these simultaneous opposite feelings. Then he is no more satisfied with Sri *Bhagavân's* beauty and sweet pastimes. Then his relatives seem like dry and dark well, his home appears like a thorny forest and even a small amount of food as a good beating. Even if a good person praises such a devotee (which means it is true and not flattery), it stings him like a snake; he performs his daily duties like death, he carries his body like a burden. When his friends console him it stings him like poison. When he is awake he is immersed in an ocean of repentance (he thinks – why am I alive?) and sleep tears his life apart. He thinks he is alive because Sri *Bhagavân* has no mercy on him. He feels his life like repeatedly fried grains (= useless). What's more, earlier when he was a *sâdhak* he used to wish dearly to meditate on Sri *Bhagavân* – and now he finds that same meditation suicidal.

After this, love draws Sri Krishna like a magnet and reveals Himself to that *premik*. Sri *Bhagavân* too divulges His beauty, fragrance, sweet voice, handsome youth, sweet *ras*, magnanimity, munificence and all other auspicious qualities to His devotee. His excellences are extremely nectarine. When the devotee relishes these excellences he feels a great longing that increases every moment and ultimately such a colossal bliss appears in his heart that no poet can describe it.[1]

Sriman-Mahâprabhu has stated briefly the original form and activity of love in very simple terms –

"Love is a precious wealth and it is the fifth *purushârtha*[2]. It enables us to relish Sri Krishna's sweet *ras*. Love subjugates Him to His devotee and love gives us the pleasure of serving Sri Krishna." – (C.C.)

Love is the fifth *purushârtha* – the crest-jewel of all *purushârthas*. It is the greatest treasure. When we have a treasure, we enjoy – similarly whether a *premik* experiences *viraha* or *milan* – he uninterruptedly relishes sweetness. Love is the essence of Hlâdini or the Blissful Potency, hence it is most delicious. Love alone enables us to relish Sri Krishna's beauty, excellences, and sweet pastimes since "we can relish Sri Krishna's sweetness only if we have love" – (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd). Sri Krishna becomes subordinate to His devotee because of love. Just as a chaste wife subjugates a faithful husband, although Sri *Bhagavân* is independent, He becomes subordinate to his devotee on His Own. To become love-subjugated is His greatest quality. We can enjoy serving Sri Krishna when we love Him. In fact love is the only way we can gain His service. Love is the best ingredient of Sri Krishna-*sevâ*. Love appears in our heart in two ways –

- By the mercy of Sri *Bhagavân* and the devotees (allof a sudden)
- By practicing *sâdhanâ* and thus attracting mercy.

Love through the first route is very rare; it is better we perform *sâdhanâ* to gain this treasure.

Different types of devotional practice leads to different types of love

[1] We can study this topic in detail in Mâdhurya-Kâdambini
[2] Goal of a living entity

Depending on what type of *sâdhanâ* we perform we can get two types of love –

- Love that contains the knowledge that Sri *Bhagavân* is almighty
- Simply love

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd states the same in B.R.S. –

"mâhâtmya-gyâna-yuktashcha kevalashcheti sâ dwidhâ"

Devotional practice is of two types –

1. *Vaidhi*
2. *Râgânugâ*

Love gained by following the *vaidhi* path

When a *sâdhak* follows the *vaidhi* path he has a strong feeling that Sri *Bhagavân* is majestic. Therefore when he gains love, it is mixed with a sensation of glory. When a *sâdhak* practices the path of *vidhi* (or *vaidhi* path) then he gains love, however this love results in *sâlokya*, *sârshti, sârupya or sâmipya*. These are four types of liberation or *mukti* that a devotee can get. Then he goes to Vaikuntha.

"aishwarya-gyâne bidhi-marge bhajan koriyâ,
boikunthete jây chaturbidha mukti pâiyâ"

Meaning - "When we practice *bhajan* in the path of *vidhi* by considering Sri *Bhagavân* as majestic, we attain liberation and go to Vaikuntha." – (C.C.Âdi.3.17.)

Love gained by following *Râgânugâ*

The *Râgânugâ* devotee worships Sri Krishna as the Son of Vrajendra (King of Brajadhâm, that is, Nanda *Mahâ*râj). It is devoid of a sense of majesty. Hence such a devotee gains simply love or exclusive love or *'keval' prem*. The devotional practice in *Râgânugâ* path is without a hint of opulence or *aishwarya-gyân*. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd states this in B.R.S. –

"râgânugâshritânâncha prâyashah kevalo bhavet"

Meaning - "The devotees who practice *Râgânugâ* almost always (*prâyashah)* gain *keval prem*."

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained the word '*prâyashah*' (almost always) as – "Although a devotee may follow *Râgânugâ* if his devotion is tainted with *vaidhi bhakti* then he will not attain 'exclusive love'."

This means that not necessary that all *Râgânugâ* devotees will attain *keval prem*. However we should note that we can taste the pure sweetness of *Braja-ras* only when we possess *keval prem*.

Love is extremely difficult to comprehend

"The devotee who gains the new-found love is indeed blessed. Even the Vedic scholars are unable to comprehend his speech and actions." – (B.R.S.)

"The devotee who has achieved love – even the wise cannot understand his speech and actions." – (C.C.Madhya.23.21.)

Ordinary people feel joy and sorrow related with their body and material conditions. Although a *premik* devotee too expresses such feelings, it is entirely different from those expressed by materialistic people. A devotee who has gained love is absorbed in bliss all day and night. His joy and sorrow depends on whether he has attained Sri *Bhagavân* or is in *viraha* from Him. These are divine joy and sorrow. They are realizations that are always *ras*-full and supremely sweet. We can never compare these realizations with any happiness or suffering of this world. The loving devotee rides on the waves of transcendental pleasure and pain that whatever feelings he may express

externally – forget ordinary mortals – even Vedic scholars who may be inexperienced in the mysteries of love – are incapable of understanding. When they see the *premik* laughing, weeping, singing and dancing, they simply think he is a lunatic. Of course those who know the mysteries of love can understand such a devotee.

Love depends on your relation with Sri *Bhagavân*

We already know what is love – "when we feel that only Sri Krishna belongs to me and I posssess nothing else". Now, this possessiveness depends on our relation with Him. It is possible for us to feel like this only when we have established some sort of bonding with Him, for instance, that of a servant, friend, parent or sweetheart. Therefore love is of four types – depending on the bond – namely –

- *Dâsya-prem* – love in servitude
- *Sakhya-prem* – friendly love
- *Vâtsalya-prem* – parental love
- *Madhur prem* – conjugal love

The *shânta* devotees are happy just to get His *darshan*. They never feel He belongs to them. Their idea is – Sri Krishna is *âtmârâm* and *âptakâm*; He does not require any *sevâ*. Therefore a *shânta* devotee does not wish to perform *sevâ,* yet *bhakti* means '*sevâ'*. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has called the *shânta* devotee as a borderline case due to two reasons –

- He does not feel that Sri *Bhagavân* belongs to him and
- He does not wish to do *sevâ*

"The *shânta* devotee has absolutely no sense of possessiveness regarding Sri Krishna. His head is crammed with the knowledge that He is the Supreme Brahman and *Paramâtmâ*. When a devotee is in *shânta-ras* he can only realize the true form of Sri Krishna and nothing else." – (C.C.Madhya.19.177-178)

"A *shânta* devotee has only two qualities –
1. he has firm belief in Sri Krishna
2. he has no desire for anything not pertaining to Sri Krishna." (C.C.Madhya.19.175)

dâsya-prem

A devotee who is bound to Sri Krishna as a servant has the qualities of a *shânta* devotee – that is – he is a firm believer of Sri Krishna and has no desire for anything not pertaining to Sri Krishna. He has an additional quality, that is, he longs to perform *sevâ*. Eg. Sri Krishna's servants in Dwâraka, such as, Dâruk.

"The servant is completely in awe of Him and thinks of Him as a Master. He considers Sri Krishna as Almighty God and reveres Him highly. He pleases Sri Krishna by constantly serving Him. He has all the qualities of a *shânta* devotee and also one more - and that is – '*sevâ*'."
– (C.C. Madhya.19.178-180)

The Brijwâsis have *keval prem* for Sri Krishna since none here considers Him God. The servants in Brajadhâm such as Raktak and Patrak do consider Him a prince (the Son of Nanda *Mahâ*raj), but they never feel He is God. Hence Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has called their love 'sweet'.

sakhya-prem

The *Gopa* boys such as Shridâm, Subal etc have pure friendly love. True, Sri Krishna has friends such as Uddhav and Arjun in Dwâraka; however they are in *aishwarya-gyân*.

"Love decreases when a devotee senses opulence (*aishwarya*), however when a devotee has *keval prem*, even though he may behold Sri Krishna's majesty he does not accept it." – (C.C.)

When Arjun saw Sri Krishna's majestic Universal Form, he was astounded, and his love diminished. He had begged forgiveness from Sri Krishna for his earlier behavior in a friendly

mood. We find this in Bhagavad-Gita. On the other hand see how the *sakhâs* in Brajadhâm behave. They were seeing Sri Krishna killing terrible *asurs* nearly everyday, yet they never thought He is God. They only thought – "Oh! Our friend is so strong!" and they loved Him all the more. They rejoiced when they defeated Him in sports and climbed on His shoulder to punish Him; they merrily bit into fruits before feeding Him. They say –

"As if you are better than any of us! All of us are equal." – (C.C.)

"The *sakhâs* have the qualities of a *shânta* devotee and wish to serve like the servants. The difference between the *sakhâ* and the servant is that while the servant respects Him, the *sakhâ* has no such feeling. He climbs on Sri Krishna's shoulders, play and fight with Him. He serves Sri Krishna and also makes Him serve. A friend has great faith in Sri Krishna and has no respect for Him. Hence *sakhya-ras* has three qualities by which you can recognize it –

1. plenty of possessiveness for Sri Krishna
2. considers Sri Krishna non-different from himself
3. he has subjugated Him." – (C.C.Madhya.19.181-184)

In Brajadhâm Sri Nanda Mahârâj and Mother Yashomati has pure parental love. Vasudev and Devaki too have parental love, but they are in *aishwarya bhâv*. When Sri Krishna had appeared before them they had fallen at His feet and eulogized Him. Later on also we see that they have reverently stated that Sri Krishna and Baladev are not their sons; rather they are the Supreme controllers. However Sri Nanda-Yashomati were very happy to receive Sri Krishna and they performed *pujâ* that was appropriate for a new-born baby. They arranged this to protect Him from all inauspiciousness, something that any ordinary parent would do. They donated huge wealth, gems and cattle seeking His welfare. Mother Yashodâ, in spite of seeing Baby Krishna kill Putanâ with her own eyes, tried to protect Him in everyway by performing some or the other ritual. She never thought for a moment whether one who can kill such a ferocious demoness at such a tender age really needs any protecting ritual or not. She has constanly prayed for His well-being. When she saw her son stealing butter and curds, she even beat Him and scolded Him so that He would grow up to be a good man. When Sri Krishna carried his sandals on His head and brought them to him, Nanda Mahâraj was immersed in the ocean of bliss. So Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita states –

"A devotee in *Vâtsalya*-love has the qualities of a *shânta* devotee and *sevâ* that is present in *dâsya prem* also. However here we call that *sevâ* as '*pâlan*'[1]. A devotee in parental mood has no awe and reverence for Sri Krishna – same like a friend. He has more sense of possessiveness and so he beats and chastises Him. He considers himself as Sri Krishna's protector and feels that He depends on him for survival. A devotee in this mood is full of nectar since he has the qualities of the four sentiments (*shânta*, *dâsya, sakhya* and *vâtsalya)*. Therefore he drowns in the ocean of nectarine bliss. Even the scholars who are in *aishwarya-gyân* admit that Sri Krishna is subjugated by His devotees." – (C.C.Madhya.19.185-188)

Madhur prem or sweet love is special because the devotees in this sentiment serve Sri Krishna with their bodies in the mood of sweethearts. The Brajabeauties are the zenith of sweet love and they are headed by Sri Râdhâ. They are in the mood of extra-marital relationship with Sri Krishna and possess pure sweet love for Him. The queens such as Rukmini and Satyabhâmâ too possess sweet love, but they are in *aishwarya bhâv* and are within the confinement of marriage. They hold Sri Krishna in awe and serve Him as a wife. On the other hand the Brajabeautie's knowledge is pure and sweet. They serve Sri Krishna taking Him as a lover and not as a husband. All the devotees – whether they have *dâsya, sakhya, vâtsalya,* or *madhur prem* in the mood of the queens of Dwârakâ – they have a bond with Sri Krishna and serve Him according to that relation. However the *Gopis* are not bound to Him by any relation, yet serve Him as a lover with pure sweet love. They do not love Him because they have a relation with Him; rather they are bound to Him because they love Him.

"The *Gopis* love Sri Krishna accepting Him as a lover – this is the height of *ras*-exultation, and it does not exist anywhere other than in Braja." – (C.C.Âdi.4.117)

[1] Upbringing, caring and protection.

As a result, the *Gopi's* pure sweet love is replete with all the *ras* to the fullest extent. And the relish is incomparable.

"A devotee in the sweet *ras* (*madhur ras*) is –

1) Firmly established in Sri Krishna and
2) Performs plentiful *sevâ*.
3) She cares for Him without any inhibition and
4) Very strongly feels that Sri Krishna belongs to her.
5) She serves Him with her body in the mood of a consort.

Thus a devotee in the sweet *ras* has five qualities, just as the five elements have the qualities of the previous ones starting with the sky. Ultimately the earth has all the five properties.[1] In this way, a devotee in the sweet *ras* possesses all the *bhâvs* and as a result, it is so delicious that it makes one wonderstruck!" – (C.C.Madhya.19.189-192)

The Specialty of *Gopi-prem*

From the point of view of *tattva*, the Brajabeauties are Sri Krishna's own potency. Hence they are His wives. Yet Sri Krishna's *aghatan-ghatan-patiyasi*[2] Yogmâyâ made them eternally feel *parakiyâ*.[3] Actually they never got married to any other cowherd man. Yogmâyâ simply made them feel this as if in a dream, to strengthen their *parakiyâ* belief. A *parakiyâ* sweetheart faces many obstacles to meet her lover. She has to meet Him secretly without the knowledge of her friends and relatives. Sometimes she succeeds in her endeavor and at other times does not. Due to this she has to veil her erotic desires and uniting with her lover is an extremely rare phenomenon. This lends immense color and charm to their love-affair. Therefore Yogmâyâ has made the *gopis* feel a sense of *parakiyâ.*

There is another reason for this. When our goal is fraught with impediments, then our longing for the beloved increases. We feel strong agitation. Also we feel it is priceless. At long last, when we get the object of our desire, we relish it maximum - Just like one enjoys the taste of water when one is dying of thirst. The reverse is also true – if we are not thirsty, even if we get water, it is useless. Thus relish is directly proportional to desire. Stronger the desire, more the pleasure. The *Braja gopis* constantly feel new undaunted desires to serve Sri Krishna. These cravings surge in their ocean-like hearts akin to gurgling waves! When a river reaches the sea, we see that the tides are stronger. The *Braja gopis* are very close to Shyâm-*sâgar*[4], hence they experience remarkable high tide (bliss of meeting) and low tide (the pang of *viraha*) in their hearts. This results in variegated love-sports and ever new *leelâs.*

The *Gopis* suffer *viraha* from Sri Krishna as if each moment is like millions of *yugas*, similarly when they meet Him; even one *Brahma-râtri*[5] passes in a trice. Their eyes are like *chakors* that survive by drinking the immensely sweet nectarine beauty (like moonbeams) radiating from the moon like face of Shyâm-*chând*[6]. They insult the creator for making eyelids.

"Not only did the creator not give us millions of eyes, he gave us only two – and that too he covered them with eyelids! The creator only knows to perform dry austerity and is a big fool ! He has no inkling of *ras* and does not know the art of creation at all. Imagine giving only two eyes to one who will behold Krishna's face! He is the creator, yet he is so unjust! If he accepts my

[1] The five elements are – sky, air, fire, water and earth. Sound can echo in the sky. The air can reverberate sound; in addition it has another quality – touch. Fire can transmit sound; we can touch it as well as see it. Water transmits sound, has the quality of touch, is visible and also has taste. The earth has all these characteristics and also smell.
[2] One who is expert in making the impossible possible.
[3] An extra-marital relationship.
[4] Shyâm – Sri Krishna; *Sâgar* = sea. Shyâm-*sâgar* = Sri Krishna Who is like the blue sea.
[5] 72 *chatur-yugas* (a cycle of four *yugas*).
[6] The moon-like Sri Krishna.

suggestion and give me one crore eyes then I will consider him somewhat worthy for the post of a creator." – (C.C.Madhya.21.112-113)

Only the *Gopis* who are rich with *Mahâbhâv* can possess such precious sentiments. Such great love-longing can arise only out of *parakiyâ bhâv*. This is why they relish Sri Krishna's sweetness to the greatest degree.

The highest specialty of *Gopi-prem* is 'lack of a desire for sense-gratification'. They feel blessed simply to serve Sri Krishna. They never ever think of their own happiness. If they wish to make love to Sri Krishna it is only to please Him. Only a *Gopi* can make statements such as –

"I do not consider my own sorrow and I only desire His happiness for I am happy if He is happy. If He feels joy in making me suffer then that sorrow is the greatest joy for me." – (C.C.Antya.20.43)

"*kânta-sebâ sukhapur, sangam hoite sumadhur*[1]" – this is a statement made by a Braja-damsel. A desire for sense gratification never arises in a *Gopikâs* heart. They are lost in finding out new means to serve Sri Krishna every time. No lover has been able to sacrifice their own dreams to make their beloved happy like the *Gopis* have done.

"The *Gopi* never considers her own happiness and sorrow. All her endeavors are directed towards making Sri Krishna joyous. She forsakes all for Him and offers pure deep love to make Him blissful." – (C.C.Âdi.4.174-175)

We may question – "In the beginning of *Râs-leelâ* Sripâd Shukamuni has mentioned that the *Gopis* clean and decorate themselves – *limpantyahpramrijantyo'nyâ anjantyah kâshcha lochane* - (S.B.10.29.7) – then can we say that the *Gopis* do dot desire sense gratification?" The reply is –

"When we see the *Gopis* dressing up nicely, know for sure, it is to please Sri Krishna. A *Gopi* feels – I have surrendered this body to Him and now it is His property for Him to enjoy. He will touch it and feel happy, so she keeps it clean and adorns it." – (C.C.4.181-183)

Now we have another doubt. Since the *Gopikâs* do not aim for happiness, they will be bereft of joy; yet the scriptures state that happiness is the only goal for any living being. Whatever a living entity does, it is ultimately to gain pleasure, is it not? Then what is the use of such colossal *Gopi-prem*? Since it does not culminate in joy?

Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita answers –

"The *Gopis* have an extraordinary mood and it is inconceivable. When the *Gopis* see Sri Krishna, they do not wish for happiness, yet their joy is infinite. Their pleasure is millions of times greater than the joy that Sri Krishna feels on seeing them. Although they do not desire happiness it increases manifold. Is this not contradictory? We have only one solution of this riddle – The *Gopikâs* joy lies in pleasing Sri Krishna; when He sees them His exultation increases and this makes Him incomparably sweet. When the *Gopikâ* sees that Sri Krishna is joyous on seeing her, she feels all the more blissful, which makes her prettier. This in turn makes Sri Krishna jubilant and thus He looks more handsome than ever. In this manner both start competing with one another. However Sri Krishna is pleased with the beauty and excellent qualities of the *Gopis*, while the *Gopis* are happy simply to give Him pleasure. This is the reason why the love of the *Gopis* is not tainted with lust." – (C.C.Âdi.4.185-195)

Thus we discover that the *Gopis* love is absolutely flawless. Even though they may wish to make love to Sri Krishna it is only with the intention to please Him. Their love is unobstructed. Their love reveals all about Sri Krishna. Therefore He has admitted to Arjun –

"O *Pârtha,* only the *Gopikâs* truly know my glory, my *sevâ*, my wish and my deepest moods; no one else knows like they do."

[1] "Serving my Beloved is extremely joyous and is much sweeter than love-making."

This is why Sri Krishna is completely subjugated by the conjugal love of the *Gopis.*

"Sri *Bhagavân* states that *Gopi-prem* subjugates Sri Krishna completely and this love makes Sri Krishna available to the devotee in His most complete form." – (C.C.Madhya.8.88)

"Sri Krishna told the *Gopikâs* on the night of the *râs*-dance – My dear *Gopis*, the cords that bind a woman to the house is unbreakable, yet you have cut it asunder and have adored me selflessly. I will never be able to repay your debt. Your goodness is alone is the reward for your love." – (S.B.10.32.22)

The *Gopikâs* have *Mahâbhâv* and Srimati Râdhârâni is the best of them.

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has written – "Based on the amount, we can classify love into 4 categories –

1. minute
2. relatively little more than minute,
3. great,
4. extremely great

A *sâdhak* has minute love and he is able to subjugate Sri Krishna to a minute degree. Sages such as Nârad and Vyâs have little more love than this and they subordinate Sri Krishna proportionally. The Brijwâsis have great love while Srimati Râdhârâni has extremely great love. Thus Srimati Râdhârâni controls Him the most."

Conjugal Love and its height

"When a couple is bound to each other by a feeling that is not destroyed in spite of immense threat (unfavorable conditions) we call it 'love'," – (U.N. Sthâyi-63)

Example – Srimati Râdhârâni is infinitely greater than Chandrâvali in all respects – beauty, qualities, sweetness, expertise, charm etc. Chandrâvali is well aware of this fact and Sri Krishna too knows it. She also knows that He has extreme *anurâg* for Srimati Râdhârâni. Yet the bond of *bhâv* between Sri Krishna and Chandrâvali never fades.

Here, Srimati Râdhârâni's extreme beauty and excellences and Sri Krishna's tremendous love for Her are the causes that can sever Chandrâvali's love for Sri Krishna; yet their love does not die. This is the true nature of love. Why? Because both the lovers are completely without any desire for sense gratification.

This sort of love is of three types –

1. *manda* (feeble)
2. *madhya* (intermediate)
3. *proudha* (mature)

"Mature love is the one in which the lovers cannot bear separation" – (U.N.)

"When the lovers tolerate separation with great sorrow we call it intermediate love" – (U.N.)

"When the lovers may forget each other sometimes, it is feeble love."– (U.N.)

Leelâ-shakti creates such different types of love to enhance the *ras* of love and make it variegated. Of course, we should realize that Sri Krishna's love is proportional to the type of love that the sweetheart feels for Him.

"Love increases gradually from *sneha, mân*, *pranay*, *râg*, *anurâg, bhâv* and *mahâbhâv*. Just as the taste is increasingly sweet from the seed of sugarcane, sugarcane, sugarcane juice, jaggery, lump

sugar, sugar, refined sugar, double refined sugar and pure sugar. Similarly the enjoyment increases from one level of love to the next." – (C.C.Madhya.23.22-24)

The chemical analysts say that once we get the product, the reactant disappears – for instance – when the sugarcane is squeezed, we get the juice, however the sugarcane stick is no more; and when we thicken this juice to obtain jaggery, the juice disappears. Similarly when love deepens and reach the level of *mân*, we will not get the previous stage of love. When *sneha* turns into *mân*, *sneha* will vanish. This logic does not hold well in the case of love. Love has inconceivable power. It arouses the pleasure of all the levels in the heart of a lover. Even when a lover attains the next stage of love, the previous stage remains.

Sneha

"When love deepens, it makes us realize the object of love and melts our sub-consciousness. Then we call it '*sneha*'. When a lover reaches this stage he never feels satisfied on simply seeing his beloved." – (U.N.)

Who is the object of love? Sri Krishna. To realize the object of love means 'to become conscious of Sri Krishna'. *Sneha* dazzles with such realization. Love (*prem)* too makes the lover realize Sri Krishna; however this consciousness shines brilliantly when he reaches *sneha*. His *chitta* too melts more than when he was in the stage of *prem*. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written in his Lochan-Rochani purport –"This definition of '*sneha*' indicates that it is indestructible. The definition of *prem* states that one cannot annihilate *prem*. In *sneha* this quality becomes greater. When the devotee reaches *sneha*, in spite of getting Sri Krishna's *darshan*, he is not satisfied. His thirst keeps on increasing."

"janam abadhi ham,
roop nehârinu nayana nâ tirapita bhelo".

Meaning - "I have been seeing Him since birth, yet my eyes remain thirsty for more."
– (Vidyâpati).[1]

Mân

"When *sneha* increases and makes the lover relish novel sweetness and itself becomes crooked, and then we call it '*mân*'.' – (U.N.)

When *sneha* become deep, the lover relishes a sweetness that is greater and new than what he has relished earlier. Yet, he behaves crookedly and does not show any interest. When a river gushes with great speed and comes across a giant barrier, this water surges. Unable to proceed in the normal course, it divides into hundreds of streams that flow in a curved manner. Similarly, the Braja *gopis,* who are naturally crooked – when their love faces a barricade of *mân,* their love twists all the more and it rushes speedily through hundreds of courses. Hence U.N. says –

"The lover and the beloved are together; they are also attached to one another; they wish to see and embrace one another as well; yet the mood that stops them from doing so is called *'mân'*."

Although *mân* apparently troubles the lovers, it enhances their love and becomes new each moment. *Mân* serves to revitalize love, heightens the pulse and maintains novelty. *Mân* makes love that is already enjoyable, more relishing, sweeter and more tempting. Truly, *mân* is a wonderful rejuvenator in the empire of *prem* – an amazing miracle! The lover starts yearning to drink the nectar of his beloved's lotus-like lips just like a black bee tempted by a lotus full of honey. He prays to the beloved to dispel the darkness of his heart by flashing her sparkling white teeth (that is – by smiling at him). Ultimately He rolls at her feet crying - "*dehi-pada-pallavamudâram*" – and feels blessed in doing so! Actually the lover feels immense joy internally, yet he/she feigns disinterest, shows crooked behavior, sarcasm etc. outside. This is the true nature of *mân*. Hence Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita has stated –

"The *Gopis' mân* creates *ras* in Braja dhâm."

[1] *Prem* and all the higher stages are present in Srimati Râdhârâni to the maximum extent in amount as well as quality.

Pranay

"When *mân* deepens to become *vishrambha* then we call it '*pranay*'." - (U.N.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained *'vishrambha'* as – "*Vishrambha* is a state when we consider ourselves non-different from our dear one.'

We should note the point that 'we are non-different from each other' is not at all like the feeling of the brahma-yogis who think they are non-different from Brahman. *Pranay* is a very high stage of love. And love means to serve Sri Krishna and please Him. So the devotee serves more when he attains the level of *pranay*. If Sri Krishna and the devotee think they are non-different from each other, how will the devotee serve Sri Krishna and how will He accept the *sevâ*? Then what does 'feeling non-different from each other' imply here? Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has cleared our doubt in his Ânanda-Chandrikâ purport –

"'Vishrambha' means 'to have faith' or 'without awe and reverence'. The lovers consider each other's life, mind, intellect, body and belongings to be the same. Whatever belongs to Him is mine; whatever is mine belongs to Him. This is the feeling. In spite of this, sometimes they do get angry with one another – this is only to create *ras*. We should understand this. If we touch our body with our feet, do we apologize? We do not hesitate to wipe our face with our garments, do we? Similarly when the sweetheart touches Sri Krishna with her feet, she is not embarrassed; neither does she seek permission to wipe her face with His golden yellow robe. In brief, lack of self-consciousness is the main sign of *pranay.* The height of *pranay* is – *'nâ so ramana nâ ham ramani, duhu mana manobhava peshala jâni.*[1]'"

True, we have mentioned that *mân* deepens to become *pranay*. However this rule does not hold good all the time. Sometimes *pranay* turns into *mân*. Thus *pranay* and *mân* give rise to each other. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd says –

"Sometimes *sneha* deepens to form *pranay* and then the lover attains *mân;* and in some cases, *sneha* matures into *mân* and then the lover reaches the stage of *pranay.* Thus we see that *mân* and *pranay* are interconvertible. Therefore we are specifying that when the love deepens so much that the lovers express *vishrambha* (lose self-consciousness), we call it *pranay*." – (U.N.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this statement in his Lochan-Rochani commentary as follows –

"Crookedness is the specialty of *mân* and crookedness is possible only when the lover attains the stage of *pranay*. So it is logical that *mân* should appear after *pranay*. However love travels in a twisted course; the sweetheart's love is naturally warped. Hence she can feel *mân* because she has a reason and *mân* may arise in her heart for no rhyme or reason. Hence it is Srila Rupa Goswâmi's personal opinion that *mân* deepens so that the lovers lose self-consciousness and they graduate onto the level of *pranay."*

Râg

"When *pranay* reaches its maximum height, the lover feels happy in extreme sorrow; we call this stage as '*râg'*." – (U.N.)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd explains – "When a lover sees that if he accepts a sorrowful situation he will get Sri Krishna, he joyously welcomes that state; on the other hand if a happy situation does not result in obtaining Sri Krishna he feel sad. This indicates that the lover has reached the state of *râg."*

Sneha, mân, pranay and *râg* – all have variety. For instance, there are two kinds of *sneha* –

- *Ghrita-sneha*[2] (*sneha* resembling clarified butter)
- *Madhu-sneha*[1] *(sneha* that is akin to honey)

[1] He is not the lover, neither am I the beloved, our hearts have merged to become one.

[2] *Ghrita-sneha* – This *sneha* is full of loving care; however *ghee* tastes well only when you add it with some other ingredient like sugar etc. Similarly this *sneha* gives Sri Krishna pleasure when the lover also expresses other *bhâvs* along with *sneha* – like envy, pride etc.

Mân is also of two types –
- *Udâtta-mân*[2]
- *Lalito-mân*[3]

Pranay is of two types –
- *Maitra-pranay*[4]
- *Sakhya-pranay*[5]

There are further classifications of these moods. *Râg* too has various categories.
Srimati Râdhârâni expresses the second of all the above-mentioned qualities. The second attributes are higher than the first ones. The first qualities express – "I belong to you" (the sweetheart thinks she belongs to Sri Krishna), while the second qualities show – "You belong to me" or Sri Krishna belongs to the devotee. Chandrâvali displays all the first qualities while Srimati Râdhârâni has the second ones. All the qualities of Srimati Râdhârâni are present in the *sakhis* belonging to Her group since they are Her expansions.

Sri Krishna's eternal associates (*nitya-siddha*) are the embodiments of His *swarup shakti.* The above-mentioned qualities are present in them since eternity. The devotees who become His associates after attaining success in *sâdhanâ* gain the necessary qualities only after accomplishment. We call them *sâdhan-siddha*. When the *sâdhak*-body breaks up, he is born in the home of a cowherd (*âhiri-gop)* wherever Sri Krishna is performing His divine pastimes at the moment. There he gains transcendental body. He bonds with the eternal associates who are in the same mood as he is in. Their mood transmits into him.

Anurâg

"When a lover is at the height of *râg* and expresses newer and newer colorful moods, and he experiences his beloved in novel manners each moment, we call that stage as '*anurâg'*." – (U.N.)

This means that *anurâg* is "deep *râg*". When the lover's *râg* matures, his moods become all the more colorful, variegated and gain novel hues. Although he did realize his beloved Sri Krishna's sweet beauty and excellence earlier too, now he relishes them afresh – as if he had never relished them before. As a result the devotee's temptation to relish Sri Krishna's sweetness increases tremendously. Then "the thirst is not satiated, the thirst increases constantly" – (C.C. Âdi.4.149).The devotee reaches such a state. It is true that *anurâg* makes us realize Sri Krishna Whom we were relishing constantly earlier as if we are seeing Him or hearing about Him for the first time!!

Sri Ujjwal-Neelmani describes the characteristics of *anurâg* as follows –
"(1) The lovers are subjugated to each other. (2)Their love attains *'prem-vaichittya*'. (3) We extremely crave to become even inanimate objects to relish Sri Krishna's sweetness and (4) We get His *visphurti* in *viraha."*

(1) The lovers are subjugated to each other

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd explains the above statement –

"In *prem* too the lovers are subjugated to each other, yet the subordination is distinct in *anurâg*; it is newer and newer each moment."

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[1] *Madhu-sneha* – Honey is relishing on its own. It is thick. Hence this *sneha* is much deeper than the *ghrita-sneha.*
[2] *Udâtta-mân* – The sweetheart possessing '*ghrita-sneha'* express this sort of *mân*. She is generous externally, but adverse internally. E.g. Chandrâvali
[3] *Lalito-mân* – The sweetheart possessing '*madhu-sneha'* express this sort of *mân*. She has no barrier and expresses vary sweet sarcasm and witty remarks. E.g. Srimati Râdhârâni
[4] *Maitra-pranay* – Here the *vishrambha* is mingles with some degree of hesitation. E.g. When Sri Krishna reappeared in the *Râs-leelâ* (after His disappearance), a *Gopi* joyously caught His hand, while another one placed His arm around her shoulder. The One who caught His hand is the one with *maitra-pranay*, while the second *Gopi* has asserted more right, so she belongs to '*sakhya-pranay'* that is absolutely without any respect for Sri Krishna and the sweetheart asserts her freedom completely.
[5] *Sakhya-pranay* – Explained above.

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd says – "In *prem*, clearly the lovers are subordinate to each other. However, in this case the sweetheart maiden is not much subjugated since she feels shy and is reluctant to make any overture. On the other hand, in *anurâg,* we see that the sweetheart is so thirsty for Sri Krishna that she is rid of all feminine bashfulness and is completely overpowered. Thus the subjugation in *anurâg* is distinct from that in *prem*."

(2)Their love attains '*prem-vaichittya*'.

When a devotee reaches the stage of *anurâg*, he expresses a certain mood called '*prem-vaichittya'*. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd explains –

"When love surges high, even though the lover is very close to the beloved, she yearns and grieves for him thinking he is far from her – this is '*prem-vaichittya'*." – (U.N.)

The lover craves for Sri Krishna so much in *anurâg,* that in spite of lying on His lap she feels the pangs of *viraha*. This is a remarkable miracle in the Empire of Love.

"*rasabati boithi rasikoboro pâsh,*
ro-i koho-i dhani biroho hutâsh,
âr ki milobo mohe roshomoy shyâm,
biroho jaladhi koto pourobo ham.

nikotohi nâho nâ hero-i râi,
sahachari koto parabodhai tâ-i.
kânu chamaki tobo râi koru kor,
gobinda dâsa heri bhelo bhor."

Meaning - "Rasavati[1] Râdhârâni sat close to Sri Krishna Who is the greatest of all *rasiks.* And just see what my Precious Darling did – She wept and said sighing heavily writhing in the pangs of separation – 'Will I ever get Shyâm Who is full of *ras*?' Although She was so close to Him She could not see Him. The *sakhis* were trying their level best to console her and make Her see reason. Kânu was shocked and drew Her onto His lap, and when poet Gobinda dâs saw this he was immersed in joy."

(3) To relish Sri Krishna's sweetness we extremely crave to become inanimate objects even.

When our *anurâg* reaches a dizzy height, we yearn tremendously to meet Sri Krishna – so much so – if we learn that by becoming some inanimate object we can obtain Sri Krishna we crave for it. Example, Srimati Râdhârâni wants to perform *tapasyâ* to become a flute. Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has expressed in Srimati Râdhârâni's *bhâv* –

"Dear *gopis*, please ponder and tell me - what austerity did this flute perform in his past life, in which holy place and what great *mantra* did he chant? How else did he get the opportunity to drink the nectar of Krishna's lips that puts even *Amritam* to shame? That *Amritam* – for which the *gopis* cling to their lives (hoping they will get it in some distant future). The flute has no qualification at all, moreover it belongs to the male community, yet it drinks such nectar constantly!" – (C.C. Antya.16.133-134)

"I want to find out what austerity the flute performed so that I too may follow suit. After all he has no qualification, while we are worthy women (so we shall certainly get easily what he has obtained). I cannot bear the grief of not getting what this worthless flute is drinking to its heart's content! Therefore I am seriously contemplating austerity." – (C.C.Antya.16.139)

(4) We get His *visphurti* in *viraha*

When we reach the zenith of *anurâg,* even though we may be separated from Sri Krishna we feel as if we are seeing Him. This is *visphurti.* Firstly, the *anurâgini* (the devotee who is in *gopi-bhâv* and has reached the stage of *anurâg)* does not consider such meeting as illusion. She

[1] The one who is full of *ras.*

thinks it is real and rushes to take Him in her arms. When she fails to touch Him she thinks it is *sphurti*. Such are the symptoms of *anurâg.*

Mahâbhâv

When the lover's *anurâg* reaches its height and attains a special state, we call it *Mahâbhâv*. To understand *Mahâbhâv* we first need to learn a few facts about *anurâg.* Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has written in his Ânanda-Chandrikâ explanation –

"*Anurâg* has 3 aspects –

- *bhâv*
- *karan* (instrument)
- *karma* (action)

Bhâv - When a lover reaches the height of *anurâg*, she loses herself completely in relishing Sri Krishna's sweetness – so much so – that she fails to distinguish between Sri Krishna and herself. All she experiences is – 'relish'. This is the *bhâv* of the lover in *anurâg*.
Karan – '*Karan*' means 'instrument' – an object by which we can do some work. A lover can relish Sri Krishna's sweetness with the help of *anurâg*. Hence *anurâg* is an instrument. When the lover reaches the zenith of *anurâg,* he relishes Sri Krishna's sweetness to the highest degree. Thus we see that maximum *anurâg* causes maximum relish.

Karma – It means 'action'. *Anurâg* performs an action – it makes us relish Sri Krishna's sweetness. When we reach the height of *anurâg*, we relish the greatest sweetness and when we relish maximum sweetness, we experience *anurâg* in its most brilliant form. Therefore in this case, 'relishing' is the action and *anurâg* performs this action.

When the lover reaches the highest point of *anurâg*, she expresses it to the utmost level. *Anurâg* reveals maximum *bhâv,* becomes the best instrument to relish Sri Krishna's sweetness and makes her relish the sweetness to the highest degree. When she experiences these aspects of *anurâg*, she feels the most complete bliss. We call this state of *anurâg* as '***swa-samvedya-dashâ'***.

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has stated in Lochan-Rochani purport–

"When a lover experiences *anurâg,* she expresses ecstasy. There are eight symptoms of ecstasy. When the lover reaches the height of *anurâg*, she may express five, six or all the symptoms simultaneously and that too in to the greatest extent. Then we call such *anurâg* as '***prakâshito***' or 'expressive'.

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has also stated in the same purport –

"When *anurâg* increases, the lover expresses her love to the greatest degree. After all, what does it mean to be in love with Sri Krishna? It means that she considers immense pain as pleasure if that pain makes Sri Krishna happy. So we deduce that her love has reached the zenith when she considers the greatest pain as the highest pleasure. When the lover attains this stage of *anurâg*, we call such *anurâg* as ***'yâvad-âshraya-vritti'***.

The brides of honorable families find nothing more painful than forsaking the noble path of life. They are ever ready to bear the fire or consume poison to guard their honor. They can very easily and happily give up their lives for this purpose. The Brajabeauties have forsaken their near and dear ones and the noble path effortlessly to serve Sri Krishna. Giving up righteous conduct is the pinnacle of sorrow, yet they have experienced su*preme* bliss in doing so. Therefore this proves that their *anurâg* is showing *'yâvad-âshraya-vritti'."*

Now let us decipher the definition of *Mahâbhâv* from the above mentioned facts.

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has defined *Mahâbhâv* as –

"When *anurâg* attains –
1. *swa-samvedya-dashâ*
2. *prakâshito* (is expressive)
3. shows *yâvad-âshraya-vritti,*

we call it *'Mahâbhâv'*." – (U.N.)

"Even the queens of Lord Mukunda (such as Rukmini and Satyabhâmâ) cannot attain this *Mahâbhâv*; we can find it only in the Braja*devis*." – (U.N.)

Variety of *Mahâbhâv*

"In the ascending order, *Mahâbhâv* is of two types –
1. *rudha* (heightened)
2. *adhirudha* (very much heightened)." – (U.N.)

Rudha Mahâbhâv - It is the first stage of *Mahâbhâv*.

"When a lover who is in *Mahâbhâv,* expresses tears, goose bumps and other symptoms of ecstasy, we call this stage as *'rudha Mahâbhâv'*. The lover should express five, six or all the symptoms simultaneously and to the maximum extent". – (U.N.)

The *gopikâs* are *mahâbhâv-vati*[1]. When they are in *viraha* and are experiencing *rudha-mahâbhâv* –

1. They cannot tolerate the eye-lids (can also mean – a time span as short as the blinking of an eye) and
2. Even the nearby people experience agitation in the heart;
3. They consider a *kalpa* as a moment in separation from Govinda

4. They are sad because they apprehend sorrow even when Sri Krishna is in great joy;
5. Although the *gopis* are not in illusion or ignorance, they forget everything including themselves,
6. They consider a moment as long as a *kalpa.*

Now Let us understand each point in detail.

They cannot tolerate the eye-lids

When the *Mahâbhâv-vati gopis* feel *rudha-bhâv*, they cannot stand the eye-lids during Sri Krishna-*darshan*! The *gop-sundaris* curse the creator for making eye-lids. They feel –"Ohh! It would have been so much better if he had not created eye-lids, for then we could have seen our Beloved uninterruptedly, to our heart's content." Of course, the *gopis* are not created by Brahmâji, yet they consider themselves as cowherd women made by Lord Brahmâ. This enables them to relish Sri Krishna's sweetness more nicely. When they curse Brahmâji, who is one of the "Twelve Mahâjans[2]" in the mood of an ordinary milk-maid, we can comprehend how much they yearn for Sri Krishna's *darshan*.

Even the nearby people experience agitation in the heart

When the lover expresses *rudha-mahâbhâv*, even the people present nearby experience an agitation in the heart due to the immense impact of *rudha-mahâbhâv.* When the *gopis* took *darshan* of Sri Krishna during the solar-eclipse in Kurukshetra, everybody present there had experienced agitation in their hearts. This was the effect of the *rudha-mahâbhâv* of the *gopis*. This is just like the surging waves of the sea that make all nearby objects oscillate.

[1] One who is full of *mahâbhâv.*
[2] In the material world they have the maximum knowledge about Sri Bhagavân

They consider a *kalpa* as a moment

When the *gopis* unite with Sri Krishna they experience supreme bliss and even a *kalpa* passes so quickly that they feel they had seen Him only for a moment. Although the *gopis* had danced with Sri Krishna for one Brahma-*râtri* (during the *râs-leelâ*), they had felt as if it was shorter than the blinking of an eye. This is due to their *rudha-mahâbhâv* that arouses in them an extremely intense longing to sport with Shyâmsundar. When they are separated from Him, they are so much absorbed in His divine loving pastimes, that they find a *kalpa* equal to one *nimesh*[1].

They are sad because they apprehend sorrow even when Sri Krishna is in great joy

When Sri Krishna is greatly happy, they are sad because they expect something bad to happen.

"When we see our dear one in trouble, we fear for him."
– (Ancient Indian Proverb)

No one fears when we see our dear one rejoicing. However the Braja-beauties who are in *rudha-mahâbhâv,* grieve when they see Sri Krishna in a very happy mood, since they apprehend sorrow. When Sri Krishna places His foot on the bosom of the *gopis*, He is immensely happy, yet the *gopis* are sad, because they think that their breasts are hard while His feet are so soft, and they fear that He may be hurt. Fearfully they place His foot very slowly on their bosom. The last verse of Gopi-Geet proves this point.

Although the *gopis* are not in illusion or ignorance, they forget everything including themselves

Material people may forget their belongings when they are in illusion; however although the *gopis* are free of such negative factors, they forget everything including themselves. This is a remarkable characteristic of *rudha-mahâbhâv*. It happens because the *gopis* are entirely lost in Sri Krishna's beauty and excellences.

The *gopis* suffer the pangs of *viraha* so much that even one moment of separation from Sri Krishna seems like one *kalpa* to them. It is the characteristic of *rudha-mahâbhâv* that the lover feels one *kalpa* equal to one moment when she unites with Sri Krishna, and one moment as one *kalpa* when she is separated from Him.

They consider a moment as long as a *kalpa*

Now let us discuss *adhirudha-Mahâbhâv.*

Adhirudha-Mahâbhâv

"*Adhirudha-bhâv* is a state of love in which the lover has all the characters of *rudha-mahâbhâv*, but expresses inconceivable symptoms of ecstasy." – (U.N.)

We have already mentioned that when a lover reaches *rudha-mahâbhâv*, she expresses five, six or all the eight symptoms of ecstasy simultaneously.

"In *adhirudha-mahâbhâv* the lover expresses all the symptoms of ecstasy and they are much more beautiful. However her expressions do not shine as brilliantly as they do in another higher stage of love called '*mohan'*." – (Ânanda-Chandrikâ purport)

Later on we shall discuss '*mohan*'. Now let us learn the classification of *adhirudha-Mahâbhâv*.

Classification of *adhirudha-mahâbhâv*

"*Adhirudha-Mahâbhâv* is of two types –

- *Modan*
- *Mâdan*" – (U.N.)

[1] The time taken to blink an eye

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd says – "*Modan* and *mâdan* arise during conjugation only. '*Modan*' comes from the root '*mud*'. It means 'joy'. Hence '*modan*' indicates the bliss of union. '*Mad*' is the root for '*mâdan*'. Its literal meaning is 'intoxication'. Thus '*mâdan'* signifies the intoxication caused by exquisite honey-wine. Here *mâdan* refers to the blissful intoxication arising out of meeting with Govinda.

Modan

"When Sri Krishna and Sri Râdhâ meet one another, They express brilliant ecstasy that is very beautiful. Then we call such a *bhâv* as *modan*". – (U.N.)

In the stage of *rudha-mahâbhâv* too the lover expresses ecstasy; however we should remember that the symptoms of ecstasy are inconceivably special in *adhirudha-mahâbhâv*. When both Sri Krishna and Srimati Râdhârâni express these extraordinarily beautiful symptoms, then we can say it is *modan*. Sri Ujjwal-Neelmani says –
"*Modan* is a su*prem*ely rich *bhâv*. It is present only in the *gopis* of Srimati Râdhârâni's group. It does not exist elsewhere. *Modan* is the topmost character or function of *hlâdini shakti*. It is extremely sweet and lovable. It is also very great. Only Srimati Râdhârâni and Her group-members have this *bhâv*. It is not possible in Chandrâvali or any other group. This proves that Srimati Râdhârâni and Her *sakhis* are the greatest of all the Braja-*gopis*.

Mohan

When a lover feels separation, her *modan-bhâv* turns into *mohan*. She is overcome by the pangs of *viraha* and cannot help but express symptoms of ecstasy that are exceptionally brilliant (*suddipta*).

This signifies that only in *mohan*, a lover expresses all the signs of ecstasy in a '*suddipta*' manner. When the lover exhibits each and every ecstatic symptom very brilliantly, that is, she displays each sign of ecstasy to the utmost degree, then alone we can call it '*suddipta*' (prominently brilliant).

"Only one person exhibits *mohan-bhâv* – and She is Srimati Râdhârâni – the Supreme Controller of Vrindâban." – (U.N.)

Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita describes the *suddipta* signs of ecstasy as displayed by Sriman-Mahâprabhu when He relished the *mohan-bhâv* of Srimati Râdhârâni in Neelâchal –
"Lord Goursundar sprouted pimples all over and His hair stood at their ends. He resembled a *Shimuli* tree[1] full of thorns. It was scary the way His each tooth rattled and you would think all His teeth would fall off. Perspiration flowed all over His body, and on top of that, blood oozed from the pores. All the more why He looked like a *Shimuli* tree (refer glossary for picture). He could utter only *'ja ja ga ga'* since His voice was choked. Tears sprang from His eyes like water from a *pichkâri*[2] that wet everyone around Him. His complexion would sometimes be golden, and then be pink the next moment. At other times He would be as radiant as the *Mallikâ* flowers (small white flowers). Sometimes He would be stupefied and the next moment He would be rolling on the earth; at other times He would lie stiff like a dry log. He would fall on the earth and lie without breathing – seeing this, the devotees would nearly die." – (C.C.Madhya.102-108)

Symptoms of *mohan*

"The signs of *mohan* as glorified by the wise are as follows –

1. Sri Krishna faints in spite of being embraced by His consorts.
2. The lover bears intense pain and still desires only Sri Krishna's happiness.
3. It agitates the entire universe.
4. Even the animals weep.
5. The lover is ready to accept death and wants to quench her thirst for Sri Krishna with the remnants of Her bodily elements.
6. Divine lunacy". – (U.N.)

We shall now discuss these points in detail.

[1] See picture plate 1
[2] See picture plate 3

1. Sri Krishna faints in spite of being embraced by His consorts

"When Srimati Râdhârâni Who is in Braja, feels *mohan-bhâv*, Sri Krishna Who is in Dwârakâ, faints in spite of being embraced by His queens such as Rukmini and Satyabhâmâ."
– (Ânanda-Chandrikâ purport)

This shows the impact of *mohan* on the object of love (in this case, Sri Krishna).

2. The lover bears intense pain and still desires only Sri Krishna's happiness

In spite of suffering from unbearable pain the lover wishes to please Sri Krishna. When Sri Uddhav asked Srimati Râdhârâni before departing from Brajadhâm – "Dear Radhe, what message shall I gift Sri Krishna on Your behalf?" Then Srimati Râdhârâni replied – "O Uddhav, if Mukunda would have come to this cattle-field, we would be extremely happy – it is true. However if this causes even the slightest loss to Him, then He should never come."

3. It agitates the entire universe

Mohan bhâv has such a powerful impact on the material and divine worlds that Sri Ujjwal-Neelmani describes –

"When Srimati Râdhârâni Who was in *mohan-bhâv, prem*-exhaled, the love-smoke pervaded the universe and humankind yelled in pain, the *Nâgas* (celestial serpents) are agitated, the heavenly beings perspire profusely and even Kamalâ *devi* in Vaikuntha, shed abundant tears. In this manner, all universes, although joyous, was extremely miserable."

4. Even the animals weep

When Srimati Râdhârâni heard that Sri Krishna had gone to Dwârakâ, She was seated in a *kunja* on the banks of the Kâlindi. Hearing this terrible news She covered Herself with His golden yellow robe and embraced a beautiful creeper. Then She let out such a heart-rending cry that even the fish and other aquatic animals of the Kâlindi wailed with Her.

5. The lover is ready to accept death and wants to quench her thirst for Sri Krishna with the remnants of Her bodily elements

The *Mahâ*jan has described –

"jâhân pohuaruno charane choli jâto,
tânhâ tânhâ dharani hoie mojhu gâto.
jo sarobare pohu niti niti nâho,
mojhu anga salilo hoi tathi mâho.
e sakhi biroho morono nirodondo,
oichhe milobo jobo gokulochando.
jo darapane pohu nijo mukho châho,
mojhu anga-jyoti hoi tathi mâho.
jo beejane pohu beejoi gâto,
mojhu anga tânhi hoi mridu bâto.
jânhâ pohu bharamoi jaladhara shyâmo,
mojhu anga gagano hoi tochhu thâmo.
gobinda dâso oho kânchano gori,
so rasamoy tonu tohe kiye chhori."

Meaning - "Wherever His rosy feet tread, I wish my body to mingle with the earth there. May my body turn into water of the lake my Beloved bathes everyday. Dear *sakhi*, I do not hesitate to die in *viraha* if I can get the Moon of Gokul (Sri Krishna) by doing so. When my Beloved looks at Himself in the mirror, may my radiance illuminate that room (to enable Him to gaze at Himself). When my Beloved is fanned, may my body be the soft breeze blowing on Him. When I mistake the

dark clouds as Shyâm, may my body become the sky that holds such clouds. Poet Gobinda dâs says – O golden maiden, Your body is so full of *ras* - why do you want to give it up?"

6. Divine lunacy -

It is the topmost symptom of *mohan-bhâv*. Sri Ujjwal-Neelmani says -

"Divine lunacy has an aura of illusion. It is an inexpressible characteristic of *mohan-bhâv".*

True, divine lunacy is an extraordinary event in the realm of *bhâv*. It has an aura of illusion. However the lover, who experiences this *bhâv*, is not really in any illusion. A delusion appears in the lover's heart only because she is immersed in extreme *bhâv*! Due to this when Srimati Râdhârâni experiences divine lunacy; She mistakes the clouds and the *Tamâl* to be Sri Krishna! When Srimati Râdhârâni is overwhelmed by *viraha* She has so many hallucinations. Her sweet lamentations form an incomparable priceless treasure in the empire of Vaishnav literature. Her expressions of grief are the highest truth and the topmost relish for all devotees who have entered the sphere of *bhajan.*

Divine lunacy is extremely difficult concept. This craziness is transcendental or beyond the material world. When someone in the material world goes mad, he is in illusion, however divine lunacy has an aura of delusion, yet it is the supreme truth, since the lover has only one person in Her sub-consciousness – and He is none other than Sri Krishna – Who is '*satyam shivam sundaram*'[1]. Srimad-Bhâgavatam (11.2.40) describes divine lunacy as follows –

"evam vratah swapriya-nâma-kirtyâ jâtânurâgo drutachitta uchchaih,
hasatyatha roditi routi gâyâtyunmâdavannarityati lokabâhyah."

Meaning and explanation - "When one gains *anurâg*, sometimes he laughs loudly like a madman[2], and at other times he weeps. He screams, sings and dances. Although this devotee appears to be crazy like a material lunatic, he is far from it. An ordinary madman suffers from a miserable illness, while an *anurâgi* devotee is verily liberated from the dreadful disease of material desires and is wandering in the transcendental empire of *ras*! A mentally retarded person is immersed in the darkest hallucinations, while a *prem*-crazy devotee is advancing towards the transcendental abode called 'Golok-dhâm' – the divine place of eternal bliss! One is ignorant while the other is intoxicated with divine joy!"

However divine lunacy is far above the description in Srimad-Bhâgavatam. In this stage the lover constantly relishes revelations of Sri Krishna and incessantly wanders in the realm of *ras*. She sees Vrindâban everywhere and beholds Sri Krishna's divine pastimes wherever she gazes.

We see that the mesmerizing flute forces the maidens of Braja to forsake self-control, righteousness and bashfulness – they ramble through the woods of Vrindâban like ones possessed. They ask the trees, creepers and shrubs about Sri Krishna. **Undoubtedly, a colossal maddening-*shakti* is working on them, yet their madness is nothing as compared to divine lunacy experienced by Srimati Râdhârâni**. Their madness is not all that special. Srimati Râdhârâni alone has the monopoly over this priceless gem called 'divine lunacy'. And we are fortunate that we belong to this *Kaliyug*, when Sri Goursundar has relished the sweet *ras* of this divine lunacy. Srila Krishnadâs Kavirâj Goswâmi has written –

"During the last twelve years of His divine pastimes, Lord Goursundar constantly expressed *sphurti* in Sri Krishna's *viraha.* He manifested the same symptoms as Srimati Râdhârâni did when She met Uddhav. The Lord incessantly displayed divine lunacy in Sri Krishna's *viraha*. He manifested such ecstatic symptoms all day and night. It was as if He was in illusion and He only lamented. Blood oozed from His pores and His teeth rattled. At one moment He would become

[1] Truth, Pure and Beauty Personified
[2] Please note that Srimad-Bhâgavatam has called a devotee who has gained *anurâg* as 'like a madman' and not 'mad'.

thin and the very next moment His body would bloat up. He did not sleep a wink in *Gambhirâ.* He would rub his face and head on the walls and get wounded. The house had three gates, yet the Lord would go out! Sometimes He fell near the Lion-gate[1] and at other times, in the sea.

Sometimes He would mistake the Chatak hill as Govardhan and rush towards it wailing piteously. When He saw a garden He would think it was Vrindâban. He would go there and start singing and dancing. The next moment He would faint. The Lord expressed such symptoms of *bhâv* that no one has even heard before. The joints of His hands and legs would come loose; the bones would separate from each other, although the skin remained in place.

At times the Lord's head, legs and hands would enter inside the body and He would resemble a turtle. In this manner the Lord exhibited remarkable signs of ecstasy. His heart was empty and He would only grieve. He wailed – 'O what do I do? Where do I go? How do I get Vrajendranandan? Where is my Beloved Murali-vadan? To whom do I express my sorrow and who can understand my grief? My heart is breaking without Vrajendranandan!!' The Lord lamented continuously in this piteous manner." – (C.C.Madhya.2.3-17)

Types of divine lunacy

"Divine lunacy is of various types, such as, *udghurnâ*, *chitrajalpa* etc." – (U.N.)

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has described Srimati Râdhârâni's *udghurnâ* in the 3rd act of the drama 'Lalit-Mâdhâv'. When the lady-love meets someone who is dear to her Beloved, She expresses extreme yearning that stems from deep anger. She talks animatedly with plenty of *bhâv*. This is '*chitra-jalpa'*. In the 47th chapter of the 10th *skandha* of Srimad-Bhâgavatam Srimati Râdhârâni displayed various *bhâvs* on meeting Sri Uddhav. These ten verses that make up *Bhramar-geet* contain the ten types of *jalpanâ* and it is '*chitrajalpa'*.[2]

Mâdan

Now let us study the second type of *Mahâbhâv* that is – *mâdan.*
"*Prem* is the essence (or the most condensed form) of *hlâdini shakti.* When *prem* amplifies all the *bhâvs* ranging from *rati* to *Mahâbhâv,* we call it *mâdan*. It is a *bhâv* that is superior to the supremost *bhâv*. It exists only in Srimati Râdhârâni."
– (U.N.)

When *Swayam Bhagavân* Sri Krishna appears, then all divine forms come and appear in Him. Similarly, when Srimati Râdhârâni expresses *mâdan*, love of all the gradations sparkles brilliantly through this *bhâv*. *Mâdan* is the best of all *bhâvs* and is supremely exultant – therefore we call it 'superior to the supreme'.

Mâdan is present only in Srimati Râdhârâni; even Her soul mate Lalitâ who is a prominent member of Her group, does not possess *mâdan*. Thus we discover that Srimati Râdhârâni reigns supreme in the empire of Love. *Mâdan* existed in Srimati Râdhârâni since time infinite. Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written –

"Although *mâdan* is ever-residing in Srimati Râdhârâni, sometimes it remains concealed in Her heart, and is revealed at other times." – (Lochan-Rochani purport)
Mâdan never disappears from Srimati Râdhârâni's sub-consciousness. We learn that *mâdan* is Her original nature. This makes Her more remarkable and extraordinary than other lovers who possess *Mahâbhâv*. Thus we accept the fact that where the height of love is concerned, Srimati Râdhârâni has no competition what so ever.

Let us analyse the word *mâdan* for some further relish. It stems from the root '*mad*'. Although the root word '*mad*' indicates 'joy', it is generally used to mean 'intoxicate'.

"mâdayati harshena unmâdâtiti mâdanah"

[1] The main gate of Jagannath Mandir
[2] Dear devotees, you may relish it in Sri Krishna-Karnâmritam edited by me. – Ananta das

Meaning - "We call this *bhâv* as '*mâdan*' because it has the same effect of exquisite honey-wine – it exhilarates the lover with intoxicating joy."

Symptoms of *mâdan*

"When a lover has the *bhâv 'mâdan'* –

- She feels extremely jealous of something that does not warrant resentment at all. Example –When Srimati Râdhârâni saw the garland of wild flowers oscillating on Sri Krishna's bosom, She was jealous, although the garland is lifeless and is surely not competing with Her.

- Also, although She is always united with Sri Krishna, She pays obeisance to anything that simply carries His perfume." – (U.N.) Example – Once the saffron from Her bosom had got transferred onto Sri Krishna's feet. When He had walked away from there, the saffron smeared the grass. While collecting woods from the forest, a tribal lass had been attracted by the sweet fragrance of that saffron; she had taken it and dabbed it on her face and bosom. Srimati Râdhârâni had copiously praised that tribal girl and had sung a hymn unto her. We see this in Srimad-Bhâgavatam (10.21.17) in the verse *'purnâh pulindya'.*

Sri Ujjwal-Neelmani describes the extraordinary specialty of *mâdan-bhâv* as –
"This *mâdan-bhâv* arises only during *milan*. Its impact is strangely inconceivable. It assists in the eternal pastimes in thousands of artistic ways. *Mâdan* is very much Sri Krishna Himself. Just as He is the transcendental youthful Love-God, and you cannot comprehend Him, similarly the ways of *mâdan* too are impossible to understand. This is why, neither Srila Bharat Muni nor Sripâd Shuka Muni (the descriptor of *râs-leelâ* in Srimad-Bhâgavatam) have succeeded in describing clearly the characteristics of *mâdan*."

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained this statement in his Ânanda-Chandrikâ purport as follows – "*Mâdan bhâv* arises in Srimati Râdhârâni only when She is in *milan* with Sri Krishna, and never during *viraha*. Although *mâdan* is ever-existent in Srimati Râdhârâni, it is expressed in *milan* and remains concealed in *viraha.*"

Now we have a question – "Do you remember the example of the symptoms of *mâdan*, when we spoke about the tribal girl? Well, when Srimati Râdhârâni felt *mâdan* and spoke that verse, She was nowhere near Sri Krishna. Then how does the tribal-girl-example fit in, since *mâdan* occurs only during *milan*?"

The reply is – "When *mâdan* expresses itself, the lover experiences kissing and embracing (or conjugal bliss) and within this experience she also realizes the pangs of *viraha*. She undergoes two experiences – of *milan* and *viraha* in one situation itself. In fact this is the strange specialty of *mâdan.*"

The question may arise – "How can the sweetheart cry out in longing of *viraha* when she is actually making love to Sri Krishna?"

We answer – "This is why Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has used the word 'strange' to explain the nature of *mâdan*. There are innumerable types of conjugation and innumerable types of *viraha*-lamentations during such love-making – this is extremely remarkable! We cannot explain how it happens – this is the wonder of *mâdan*!"

How *mâdan* differs from *anurâg*

We have mentioned that *anurâg* has a characteristic – *visphurti* during *viraha.* However when the sweetheart experiences *viraha* in *mâdan*, it is not like the '*visphurti* in *viraha'* of *anurâg*; since it is not a *sphurti* – it is real. What happens in *anurâg*? The lady-love experiences *viraha*, then as she remembers her Beloved repeatedly, she gets his *sphurti*; in *sphurti* she embraces Sri Krishna. Then she is happy and she does not cry out in longing. We

know in *mâdan* it is not like this. Hence the simultaneous *milan* and *viraha* that occurs in *mâdan* distinguishes it from *anurâg.*

True, the behavior of *mâdan* is entirely incomprehensible. Just as the glory of Sri Krishna, Who is the transcendental youthful Love-God Whom we worship with *Kâm-beej* and *Kâm-Gâyatri,* is inconceivable, so is *mâdan*! As a result, Srila Bharat Muni who is the preceptor of the 'primeval *ras'* or the erotic *ras* and Srila Shukadev Muni – the orator of Srimad-Bhâgavatam too have failed in describing the characteristics of *mâdan*. When *mâdan* is so wonderful, then how much more wonderful, incomparable, inexpressible and inconceivable is the glory of the One Who is always full of *mâdan-âkhya Mahâbhâv*[1] - Srimati Râdhârâni?

[1] The mahâ*bhâv* called mâdan

Sri Rasa-Tattva-Vigyaan

(Analytical Study of *Ras*)

What is '*ras*'?

'*Ras*' is something unearthly and beyond the Laws of Nature. Like Brahman, *ras* is inconceivable and inexpressible. We can only realize *ras* and cannot arrive at it with logic. *Ras* transcends all thought-processes and gives us relish when our *chitta* has attained the state of pure goodness and shines brilliantly. Those who do not have the desire to relish *ras* can never realize *ras*. The author of Sâhitya-Darpan says –

"*Ras* is beyond the material world and it can be realized only by a *rasik*."

Alankâr-Koustubh says – "*Ras* creates magic" and "A feeling of 'WOW!!' is the soul of *ras*; if, after relishing something, we do not say 'WOW!!' then it is not *ras*."

Suppose we see something so gorgeous that we have never seen before or we hear something so beautiful that we have never heard before, then we feel a kind of joy and our heart somersaults. Consequently, unknown to us, our eyes too bulge out. This is 'wonderment'. We call this thrilling experience as '*ras*'.

What do we mean by wonderment?

Alankâr-Koustubh also states –

"If some favorable objects (or incidents) come together to create such a joyful thrill in the heart, that stupefies our external as well as internal senses – then we can call such a delightful experience as *'ras'*."

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd too has written –

"A magical inexpressible relish that shoots across a heart blazing with goodness and is beyond all human perceptions, it is '*ras'*." – (B.R.S.2.5.132)

Ras is commonly of two types –

1. material *ras* – we can feel this *ras* with our heart
2. transcendental *ras* – realized by the soul

When talented writers compose literature about worldly characters then the reader relishes some *ras.* We call this as 'material *ras*'. The rhetoricians call this as 'close to relishing Brahman'. However the authors of transcendental *ras*-literature flatly denounce this and state - "The *ras* in material literature target the heart of material people, hence it is full of Mâyâ (illusion) and contains the three *gunas* (modes of nature). Naturally it is short-living. There is no way we can gain complete bliss from this *ras.*"

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has clearly written in Priti-Sandarbha (110) –

"Worldly passion can give only slight pleasure, since if we analyze deeply, material emotions ultimately result in sorrow. Therefore we cannot respect material literature that gives rise to worldly *ras.*"

Srila Kabi Karnapur's opinion is –

"*Ras* is of three types –

1. *prâkrita* (material) e.g. the *ras* found in the novel 'Mâlati and Mâdhav[1]'

[1] A famous book based on material lovers

2. *aprâkrita* (transcendental) e.g. the *ras* reposing in Sri Râdhâ-Krishna
3. *âbhâs* (shadow of *ras*) e.g. *ras* existing in an inappropriate place or situation"

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained this statement as follows –

"We classify *ras* into three types and say that material *ras* is a type of *ras* just to satisfy the fans of material literature. Actually there is no relish in material novels. It is a misake to think that worldly events can arouse *ras*. It is certain that mundane heroes and heroines will ultimately transform into ash, worms or stool[1] – then how can we get *ras* in them? Also when we analyze the truth we see that that the worldly poets are so ignorant that they present their heroes and heroines as 'beautiful like flowers, youthful and fragrant'. Such falsehoods only fuel our hatred all the more than arousing *ras*. This is the reason why the author (Srila Kabi Karnapur) who is a *rasik* has not cited a single poem composed by material poets as examples; rather everywhere he has only described transcendental *ras* and has given likewise examples. Those who have had the good fortune to relish blissful transcendental divine *ras*, find material *ras* as worthless and horrible. But of course, material literature offers more happiness than the pleasures of the flesh. We do not doubt this fact.

Who relishes *ras* ?

In this context the rhetoricians are divided into 4 groups. The first group opines that the real heroes and heroines of an event are the ones who mainly relish the *ras*. The actors who represent them (in a drama) get the taste of *ras* little bit. If they do a lot of rehearsal and their hearts are clear, they may relish *ras.*

The second group says - the real life characters are limited. They face troubles and tribulations in life – so how can they relish any *ras*? Rather the actors who play their parts relish the *ras.*

The third group states – the real characters do not relish *ras* at all, and neither do the actors representing them. The actors are but imitators. They only practice and become experts at displaying emotions (which are not real). So they do not enjoy *ras*. Then who gets the pleasure of *ras*? The *rasik* audience. After all, the public sees and hears with absorption.

The fourth group says that if the actors have a clear heart, they will feel the emotions of the real characters and hence they too will relish *ras*, and of course, the public too will certainly enjoy *ras.*

Most of the rhetoricians agree on the point that the audience relishes *ras.*

However one point is clear from the above discussion that in transcendental *ras* – all can relish *ras* – the real characters, the actors playing their role as well as the audience. The real characters (e.g. the Divine Couple) do not suffer from the problems faced by the original characters of material literature – that is – they are not mortals, are not limited and do not endure troubles and tribulations. Therefore Their associates too relish *ras*. Divine passion is naturally immortal and unlimited. The main subject of transcendental *ras* (Sri Krishna) is the Supreme Brahman Himself and all His activities too are divine. Sri Hari's excellences are innumerable, His beauty is immeasurable and He is the unlimited turbulent ocean of *Leelâ-ras*! Also, Sri *Bhagavân's* names, beauty, qualities and pastimes are not mere agglomeration of words. They are non-different from each other.

"Sri Krishna's names, Sri Krishna's excellences, Sri Krishna's divine pastimes are all equal to His *swarup* and hence they are eternal and blissful." – (C.C.)
Therefore nothing can stop or diminish the *ras*-relish of Sri Krishna's names, excellences, pastimes etc. We can realize transcendental *ras* even when confronted with *anarthas* such as fear (e.g. Prahlâd *Mahâ*râj) and intermission caused due to rebirth (Jada-Bharat). Not even Brahman-

[1] After death, if one is cremated, the body turns into ash, if one is buried, then worms eat that body to reproduce more worms, and if the body is left as it is, then birds and beasts eat it to produce stool.

realization can obstruct one from relishing divine *ras!* Shukadev is a brilliant evidence for this. Hence we'd better accept that *ras* exists only in divine passion.

Who is qualified to relish devotional *ras?*

"Those who have past and present desire for devotional *ras*, they alone can relish *bhakti-ras*."
– (B.R.S. 2.1.6.)

What is 'past' and 'present' desire?

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained the above verse – "Past desire refers to the yearning for *bhakti* in the past life, while present desire means the desire for *bhakti* in this life. When a devotee has a passion for Sri Krishna in this life, it is clear that he has present desire; however to realize *ras,* he also has to have had a desire for *ras* in the past life. Both are necessary to relish *ras.*"

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has clarified further –

"When we are offense less and if we practice *bhajan* under the shelter of Sri Gurudev's lotus feet, we can reach the state of passion; even then, we will relish *ras* only in the next birth."

Now we have to see what we mean by 'the desire for *ras*'[1] ? How does it arise in the heart? When? In whose heart does it arise? When we delve deep into *tattva,* we learn that Sri Krishna is *rasa-swarup* (*ras* personified). He and the living being are related to each other since infinity and the living being longs for *rasa-swarup* Sri Krishna since then – and not for anybody else. However the living being has turned away from Sri Krishna and so he does not understand this. The longing drives him to enjoy *Krishnetar* objects (things other than Sri Krishna). Of course, he does not really enjoy. The innate desire of his original self is to relish *rasa-swarup* Sri Krishna. In stead of doing this, he simply wallows in sense-gratification. However, the soul is transcendental. He is against material pleasure. He is not happy to indulge in the pleasures of the flesh. After all, the soul has only one goal – to relish *sevâ-ras* of the *rasa-swarup* Sri Krishna. This means, the soul enjoys when he serves Rasarâj. This is why, in spite of rolling in material enjoyments since infinity, the living being remains ever dissatisfied. He can gain satisfaction and become blessed only by relishing divine *ras.* The Shrutis are very merciful. They clearly tell the living being, who has floundered from his goal (*ras*-relish) that Sri Krishna is *ras* personified. They proclaim –

"*raso vai sah*" – He **alone** is *ras*.

"*rasam hyevâyam labdhânandi bhavati*" – Sri *Bhagavân* is *ras* personified and **only** by obtaining Him the *ras*-thirsty living being can gain bliss.

The words 'alone' and 'only' indicate that we can never gain happiness from anything (or anyone) other than Sri *Bhagavân*. Thus when we search for our root desire, we discover that it is the 'desire to serve Sri Krishna' or simply put, '*bhakti*-desire'. When we have faith and reverence, we should take the shelter of the saints and Spiritual Master. We should associate with them and gain their *kripâ*. By their mercy, the desire for *bhakti* arises in our heart. It is the same as the desire to perform *bhajan*. After this we embark on the path of *bhajan.* When we perform *bhajan* enthusiastically, gradually we are rid of *anarthas*. Then we gain *nishthâ*, interest, *âsakti* and finally we are promoted to the stage of rati. *Rati* (passion) is a devotee's permanent *bhâv*. This 'permanent *bhâv'* mingles with *vibhâv*, *anubhâv*[2] etc. and gets converted into *bhakti-ras*. Thus we see that only a passionate devotee is one worthy of relishing *bhakti-ras*.

Which *sâdhanâ* arouses *ras*, what causes *ras* to arise and what is the way through which *ras* arises?

[1] as mentioned in the verse in B.R.S.
[2] Please see glossary

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has written - "*Ras* arises when –

Which sâdhanâ arouses *ras*?

1. *Bhakti* has uprooted all our faults and at last we are happy. And so we are ready to receive pure goodness. Our heart is sparkling with the knowledge required to receive pure goodness,
2. We are deeply attached to Srimad-Bhâgavatam,
3. The only pleasure in our life is – the constant company of *rasik* devotees,
4. We consider the joy arising out of serving the lotus feet of Lord Govinda as the sole purpose of living,
5. We are incessantly engaged in hearing about the confidential pastimes, glorifying them and meditating on them since these are the very necessity to gain *prem*.

When the heart is radiant with the *ras*-desire handed down from the past life and the desire for *ras* in the present life, *ras* arises in it.

What causes *ras* to arise?

Worldly people relish material *ras* when a good author composes an interesting piece of literature. Transcendental *ras* is not like that. It does not depend on the merits of the author or the composition. The passion in a devotee's heart takes the form of joy and he realizes *ras* whenever he comes across anything pertaining to Sri Krishna. The passion in the devotee's own heart makes Sri Krishna extremely relishing to him and he attains dizzy heights of tremendous bliss!" – (B.R.S. 2.1.7-10)

These statements prove that *ras* is like Brahman – simultaneously gross and subtle, beyond all reasoning, and something unearthly. We can only realize *ras;* we cannot ascertain it by using logic; we cannot debate on it. If we do not have a *sanskâr* for *ras,* or a '*ras*-desire', we can never ever digest *ras*.

Who is unworthy of relishing *ras*?

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd replies –

"When the heart is burnt up with dry renunciation and one is disinterested in *bhakti*, he is not qualified to relish *ras*. For example –

- the one who is interested in only gaining dry knowledge,
- simply wants to argue
- proponent of *karma*
- the *purva-mimânsak*[1]
- the *uttar-mimânsak* who wants to disprove the statement that, the living being is not equal to the Supreme Being.

All these above-mentioned people are averse to *bhakti* in the ascending order (the second one is more averse than the first one and so on). Even the argumentative men stand a chance. Out of

[1] A mimânsak is one who examines, investigates and proves the Vedic philosophy. He arrives at the Truth by logic and analysis. They love to debate. The *mimânsak* are divided into two groups –
Purva-mimânsak – They are the followers of Rishi Jaimini. He is attributed with Karma-mimâmsâ ("Study of [Ritual] Action"). His followers dapple with mainly with *karma-kânda.*
Uttar-mimânsak – The followers of this doctrine hold that God is the omniscient and omnipotent cause of the existence, continuance, and dissolution of the universe. Creation is an act of his will; he is both the efficient and the material cause of the world. At the consummation of all things all are resolved into him. He is "the sole-existent and universal soul," and besides him there is no second principle; he is *Adwaita*, `without a second.' Shankarâchârya was the great apostle of this school.

The object of both these schools is to teach the art of reasoning with the purpose of aiding the interpretation of the Vedas, not only in the speculative but the practical portion.

curiosity they may study rhetoric, enter the path of *bhakti* and may relish *bhakti ras* to a slight extent; but the *mimânsaks* are never qualified to enter the temple of *bhakti.*

The ones practicing dry renunciation are uncouth and the remaining are plain ignorant. You know how a householder hides his most valuable items out of fear that the thieves may steal them? Similarly, Sri Krishna- *bhakti-ras* is a precious treasure. The devotee *rasik* too should hide this gem from the uncouth and ignorant. We should not discuss *bhakti-ras* with the above-mentioned people. Be especially careful of those dry *mimânsaks* (logicians and analysts), since they harbor a distaste for *bhakti-ras* and are ever-ready to jump on *bhakti-ras* to annihilate it with worldly arguments.

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has said –

"We see five types of people in this world –

a) Ignorant (*agya*) – They may be learned in the other scriptures, but have no experience of *ras*-literature (transcendental *ras,* naturally). We still call them 'ignorant'.

b) Uncouth (*grâmya*) – They are addicted to material enjoyment. They are like animals indulging in the pleasure of the flesh.

c) Wise (*prâgya*) – They are learned in *ras*-literature; they even accept that *ras* is the topmost, yet they are so unfortunate that they are not capable of relishing *ras*. All three (ignorant, uncouth and wise) are unworthy of *ras*-realization.

d) *Bhâvak* - They are devotees who are learned in *ras*-literature and are able to relish *ras*.

e) *Bhâvya* – They are also devotees. They have attained success (*siddhi)* in *ras-sâdhanâ*. They are accomplished relishers of *ras*. We call them *rasik* devotees."

We surely understand from this discussion that *bhakti-ras* is a permanent riddle for the non-devotees.

"The devotees who possess nothing but the lotus feet of Sri Hari can only relish *ras*."
– (B.R.S. 2.5.131)

How does *ras* form?

Before we go into the study of *ras*-formation, we need to become familiar with certain terms such as *vibhâv, anubhâv, sâtvik bhâv, vyâbhichâri, sthâyi bhâv* etc. Let us learn these terms and understand their definitions properly.

Vibhâv – Alankâr-Koustubh has defined it as – "It is the cause of *ras*. It arouses *ras* in us".

Vibhâv is classified into two types –

1. ***âlamban vibhâv*** (=what supports *ras*) – Sri Krishna arouses *ras* in the devotee's heart. Also, the devotee's passion for Sri Krishna causes *ras* to arise in the sâdhak's heart. Here we call Sri Krishna as the '**subject**' and the devotee as the '**shelter**' of *ras*. Thus *âlamban vibhâv* is divided into two – subject (Sri Krishna) and shelter (the devotee).

2. ***uddipan vibhâv*** (=what excites *ras*) – Sri Krishna's sweet qualities, activities, decorations, laughter, fragrance, flute, anklets, conch-shell, footprints, home, cattle-grazing pasture, Tulsi, devotees, feasts – all excite *ras* in us. So they are '*uddipan vibhâv'*.

Anubhâv – Alankâr-Koustubh states –

"'*anu*' means 'later' or 'what follows'. After *ras* arises in our heart, we express some symptoms externally. These are '*anubhâv*'. We also call them as '*ras*-action'."

Example – The subject (Sri Krishna) and the devotee (shelter) express some external characters due to their passion for each other, such as – loving glances, smiles etc.

Some expressions are loud and are easily visible – such as – dancing in joy, singing, yelling, stretching, roaring, yawning, sighing heavily, not caring how others react to our love, salivating, loud laughter, hiccupping, smiling etc. These reveal our heartfelt passion. We call these *anubhâvs* as '***udbhâswar anubhâv***' (openly visible).

"When the *anubhâvs* (symptoms of *ras*-relish) are not so visible, we call them as ***'sâtvik anubhâv'*** or simply ***'sâtvik-bhâv'***." – (B.R.S.)

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has listed eight *sâtvik anubhâvs* in B.R.S. –

1. stupefaction
2. perspiration
3. goose bumps
4. faltering voice
5. shivering
6. paleness
7. tears
8. doom"

Vyâbhichâri bhâv – Alankâr-Koustubh explains –

"This *bhâv* is not constant; it lends color to the permanent *bhâv*."

B.R.S. says – "it is a 'passing' *bhâv* – so we also call it '*sanchâri*' or passing *bhâv.*"

Let us understand it better. Just as waves rise and fall in the sea, thus making it more beautiful, some small *bhâvs* appear and disappear while we continue to remain in our own permanent *bhâv*. These waves of *bhâ*v lend color to the permanent *bhâv.* There are 33 passing *bhâvs* in total –

1. complete indifference
2. grief
3. humility
4. *glâni*[1]
5. fatigue
6. arrogance
7. pride
8. doubt
9. stress
10. *âveg*[2]
11. lunacy
12. amnesia
13. sickness
14. illusion
15. death
16. lethargy
17. stupidity
18. v*reedâ*[3]
19. *avahitthâ*[4]
20. remembrance
21. debate
22. worry
23. intelligence
24. patience
25. joy
26. curiosity

[1] Exhaustion, fatigue of the body, lassitude, languor, depression of the mind, debility, sickness.
[2] Frenzy, passionate absorption
[3] bashfulness
[4]Pretending to be disinterested (U.N. Vyâbhichâri prakaranam.64)

27. *ougra*[1]
28. amarsha[2]
29. jealousy
30. mischievousness (or playfulness)
31. sleep
32. drowsiness
33. understanding

Permanent *bhâv* or *Sthâyi bhâv* - Alankâr-Koustubh says –

"When our heart is without a tinge of *rajah* (mode of passion) and *tamah* (mode of ignorance) and it is full of only pure goodness, then an indescribable passion can fill the heart; it is the source of *ras*-relish, and the wise call it the 'permanent' or *sthâyi-bhâv*."

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd says –

"Laughter is a positive feeling while anger is a negative feeling. A *bhâv* that subjugates all other *bhâvs* whether positive or negative and looms high above them – we call such a *bhâv* as 'permanent'. The Bhakti-literatures call the passion for Sri Krishna as '*sthâyi-bhâv'*." – (B.R.S.)

Our *sthâyi-bhâv* intermingles with the *bhâvs* such as *vibhâv* etc. and is transformed into *ras*. On its own, *vibhâv* cannot make us realize *ras*. It just causes us to express *anubhâvs*. The *Vyâbhichâri* (passing) *bhâvs* only help *anubhâv.* None of these *bhâvs* can create *ras* in us if we do not have '*sthâyi-bhâv*'. When our *sthâyi-bhâv* mingles with three other *bhâvs*, then it is the *sthâyi-bhâv* that turns into *ras.* We have to be very clear about this.

Sthâyi-bhâv is permanent, whereas the other *bhâvs* such as *vibhâv* etc. change. Hence although the other *bhâvs* do make us express *ras*, they are not the source of *ras. Sthâyi-bhâv* is a form of the great power called Hlâdini *Shakti.* It is inconceivable. Therefore *Sthâyi-bhâv* is permanent and so is *ras*. We repeat – when *sthâyi-bhâv* matures, we realize *ras*. *Sthâyi-bhâv* has only one function – to please Sri *Bhagavân*.

Here, we may question –

You said – "*sthâyi-bhâv* transforms into *ras.*" In the same breath you are saying – *sthâyi-bhâv* and *ras* are both permanent. Are you not contradicting yourself? When one thing changes into another, it does not remain. This means, when *sthâyi-bhâv* will turn into *ras*, the *sthâyi-bhâv* will not exist any more, since now it is *ras!* Then how can you call *sthâyi-bhâv* permanent? Also how can you call *ras* as permanent? Since it has taken birth from *sthâyi-bhâv* – which means, earlier it did not exist. Does this not mean that both *sthâyi-bhâv* and *ras* are temporary?

The answer to this question is –

All the divine pastimes of Sri Krishna are eternal. His various ages such as childhood, adolescence, youth – are also timeless. His behavior in these ages is eternal as well. However the devotees have a tremendous desire to behold these pastimes or to see Him in a particular form. Then He uses this as an opportunity to save the world and He manifests these pastimes. When the work is over, that *leelâ* unmanifests. The *leelâ* continues to exist, but shrouded from material eye. Similarly *ras* expresses itself in a devotee's heart and when the *vibhâv* etc. disappear, *ras* too conceals itself.

When material reactants transform into products, the reactant disappears. For example, when sugarcane juice turns into molasses, the juice is no more. Later when it forms sugar, we do not see the jaggery. However transcendental objects are different from material things. They have an inconceivable potency. They get transformed without losing their separate identity. Example – Sri Krishna is eternally a *kishor*. Yet, His *kishor*-body becomes a child, adolescent and the adolescent-body becomes all the more beautiful as a *kishor*. Every stage is eternal. All the bodies – child,

[1] Tremendous anger. This *bhâv* has no place in *madhur ras*. So we find this *bhâv* only in the grandmother, in-laws etc. who are the side-characters in the events of *madhur ras*. – (U.N.13.88-89)
[2] Intolerance resulting out of criticism, insult etc. (U.N.13.90-91)

adolescent, youthful – are eternal. Similarly, our permanent *bhâv (sthâyi-bhâv)* is eternal, yet it transforms into *ras*. Both – *sthâyi-bhâv* and *ras* continue to exist separately.

About the formation of *ras*, Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written in his Priti-Sandarbha –

"The *bhâvs* that are worthy of becoming *ras*, become *ras*."

Let us understand this statement better. Material *vibhâvs* – yes, even the *vibhâvs* pertaining to *devatâs* are material – are temporary and are lacking in ingredients of *ras*. So they do not form *ras*. Transcendental *vibhâvs* have all the ingredients to form *ras*. These ingredients have 3 qualifications –

1. The right *swarup*
2. The right associate
3. The right recipient

1. **The right *swarup*** – The eternal associates have the right *swarup*, hence they possess *sthâyi-bhâv* and are always situated in bliss. They reveal Sri *Bhagavân* to us and constantly please Him with their *sevâ*. They even criticize the joy of liberation. Such is the *sthâyi-bhâv* of the dear associates of Sri Krishna. Although we are worldly beings, by the blessing of Sri Krishna and His devotees, this *bhâv* can arise in our hearts also.

2. **The right associate** - The *vibhâvs* of material *ras* are mundane. Therefore they are naturally disqualified to arouse *ras*. On the other hand, the eternal loving confidantes of Sri *Bhagavân* love Him so much that their *bhâv* spontaneously create *ras*. Their love is self-manifesting. It also reveals Sri Krishna and everything pertaining to Him. This love appears in the heart of earthly devotees and gives them similar *bhâv*. So we should hear and meditate constantly on those eternal associates, who are in a mood akin to ours. We should be choosy about the association we keep. We should keep the company of only *rasik* and *sajâtiya* devotees who can inculcate *ras* in us.

3. **The right recipient** – The devotee (*sâdhak*) too should have a desire to obtain *bhakti* for Sri *Bhagavân*. Then only he is qualified to relish *bhakti-ras.*

Alankâr-Koustubh has explained these points in detail –

Sri *Bhagavân's* eternal associates and the devotees who follow them relish transcendental *ras*. Thus we see that two types of people relish *ras* –

1. the eternal associates of Sri *Bhagavân* Who participate in His divine *Leelâs*
2. the devotees who perform *sâdhanâ* according those *leelâs*.

Ras forms spontaneously in the eternal associates and they constantly relish *ras*. On the other hand, the devotees who follow them undergo two types of experiences –

1) They meditate on the eternal associates according to their liking (*bhâv*) and on their pastimes with Sri *Bhagavân,* and in this manner *ras* arises in their heart.
2) They only hear and glorify the sweet *Leelâs* of Sri *Bhagavân,* thus they relish *ras*. When someone sings or enacts such *leelâs*, or some great soul speaks Hari-*kathâ* very sweetly, then the devotees who hear or see this can relish *ras*. On top of this if all the people involved in these activities are in the same *bhâv* and harbor the same desire, then the devotee can equalize his feelings with the associates depicted in the drama (or Hari-*kathâ*). This enables him to relish greater *ras*.

So we can understand that although the eternal associates are present in transcendental realm, and we reside in the material world, we too can relish transcendental *ras* like they. The only difference is that eternal associates have natural *bhâv*. They do not need any instruction nor do they need to hear any divine discourse. However we live in the material world, so we need the right *sanskâr* and it is necessary for us to perform *sâdhanâ*. These will intensify our desire to relish *ras* and our passion will blaze forth. We need all these, because we cannot relish *ras* without a desire for *ras* and if we are devoid of *ras-sanskâr*.

Equalization of *Bhâv*

What is *bhâv*? How can we get the *bhâv* of the eternal associates?

'*Bhâv*' is an experience of Sri Krishna's sweetness. Although we live in the material world, all of us can get this *bhâv* by the mercy of Sri Krishna and His devotees. But how? The *bhâv* of the dear eternal associates get equalized with the feelings of the *sâdhak*. What is equalization? It means when two things become non-different from each other, yet maintain individuality. Let's put it like this – our *bhâv* remains independent, yet becomes equal to the *bhâv* of a *sajâtiya* devotee. We call this *bhâv*-equalization. By the effect of *bhâv*-equalization, we – the mundane devotees, too can react in the same extraordinary manner as that of the eternal devotees – and very easily, at that. Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd states –

"Formation of *ras* is beyond this material world. Hence, it is true that, it is very difficult to comprehend. We find that the *vibhâvs* and *ratis* manifest themselves easily and in an excellent manner in the senior and junior devotees. *Bhâv*-equalization means 'unable to decide the difference between each other's *bhâv*'. *Bhâv*-equalization has such an impact that even the new devotees can have the same feelings or perform the activities that the experienced devotees can."

– (B.R.S. 2.5.101-102)

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has elucidated the above statement as follows –
"During a *sat-sang*, someone was reciting Râmâyan. He came to the part when Hanumân was about to take a leap to cross the Indian Ocean. From the audience an emotional devotee jumped up without any embarrassment or hesitation. He was so much absorbed in the same *bhâv* as that of Hanumân that he wanted to cross the ocean there in the assembly itself!

Another example –

An emotional devotee was performing the role of King Dasharath in a drama. When he heard that – 'Râm has gone to the forest' – he really and truly died on the stage. This happened since he was extremely absorbed in the *bhâv* of Dasharath."

Thus we see that when we develop passion, although we may be newbies in devotion, we can equalize our *bhâv* with that of the mature devotees and *ras* will arise in us. Rhetoric says – *bhâv*-equalization has an inconceivable impact. It can make an immature devotee feel non-different from Hanumân and he leapt up in an assembly to cross the ocean. Although he was an ordinary man, *bhâv*-equalization lent him an extraordinary enthusiasm to cross the ocean, which is an astonishing feat. Sâhitya-Darpan states –

"There are such *bhâvs* with which we feel non-different; we can equalize with those *bhâvs*."

However for this we have to have passion (*rati*). Then even newcomers (in devotional practice) can experience *bhâv*-equalization with *siddha* devotees. This forms *ras*.

The Sage Bharat has said – "*Bhâv*-equalization has an inexpressible power. It makes the audience/reader feel non-different from a certain character or situation."

During *bhâv*-equalization sometimes we feel different and at other times non-different from the *siddha*-devotees. When we relish *ras*, we feel completely non-different. E.g. the devotee relished the same *ras* as did Sri Hanumân. When we feel entirely non-different, this stage is called 'tanmayi-bhavan'[1]. We should remember that the literature or drama has a very minor role in creating *bhâv*-equalization; the main thing is our own *rati.* If we do not possess *rati*, the narrator/actor cannot arouse *bhâv*-equalization in us. *Rati* makes Sri Krishna appear sweet, and therefore it reveals all that is pertaining to Sri Krishna. *Rati* makes Sri Krishna's sweetness relishing to us, and this in turn, enhances *rati.* Thus we find that the *vibhâvs* and *rati* help each other to make us relish *ras.* Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has written –

"There are pandits who strongly vote that divine literatures and dramas are completely responsible in arousing *bhâv*-equalization, and hence, they instruct us to read/hear divine literature and dramas to the greatest degree. However we state that *rati* for Sri *Bhagavân* is

[1] Complete absorption

remarkably powerful and precious. We can never ever doubt its sweetness. We ascertain *rati* as the topmost reason for *bhâv*-equalization." – (B.R.S. 2.5.90-91)
It is also true that although a devotee may be emotional, and equalize his *bhâv*, he will not relish *ras* if he does not have the *sanskâr* or *ras*-desire in past life. *Ras*-relish is directly proportional to our *ras*-desire. If our desire for *ras* is less, when the cause of *ras* is removed, our relish too will disappear[1]. On the other hand, a *rasik*-devotee continues to relish *ras* even when the cause of *ras* is no more. *Ras* keeps on expressing itself right in front of him; it enters his heart and caresses every pore of his body. Even though the cause of *ras* has vanished, a *rasik*-devotee continues to relish *ras*. He forgets everything else – after all, *ras* is magic!!

Primary and secondary *bhakti-ras*

Sriman-*Mahâ*prabhu has thus instructed Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd –

"We can classify *rati* into five types[2] depending on the class of the devotees –

1. *shânta rati* – for *shânta* devotees
2. *dâsya rati* – for devotees in servitude
3. *sakhya rati* – for the devotees in friendly mood
4. *vâtsalya rati* – for the devotees in the parental mood
5. *madhur rati* – for the devotees in conjugal mood

Hence there are five types of *ras* – *shânta, dâsya, sakhya, vâtsalya* and *madhur.* These five *ras* are the chief amongst all the *ras* present in Sri Krishna-*bhakti.*" – (C.C. Madhya.19.157-159)

There are some more *ras* other than these five *ras.* They are *hâsya* - laughter (humor), *adbhut* - extraordinary, *veer* – valour, *karun* – sad, *roudra* – anger, *veebhatsa* – horror, *bhaya* – terror. These seven *ras* are secondary .The devotee can be situated in any of the five primary *ras* – that is – he may be in the mood of a servant, parent etc. Then, due to some reason, these seven *ras* may enter his heart like a stranger and when the cause is removed, these *ras* too disappear. *Shânta* etc. are permanent *ras.* They remain always in the particular devotee's heart. For example, there is a sad situation. Then a devotee feels *karun ras*. When the sorrowful situation disappears, the *karun ras* too vanishes. Same is the case with *hâsya ras* (laughter) etc. We should remember that the five principal *ras* never leave a devotee situated in that *ras.*

"The five primary *ras* are permanent in a devotee. The seven other *ras* are secondary. They come and go like strangers." – (C.C.Madhya.19.161)

The seven secondary *ras* appear and disappear in the dear associates of Sri *Bhagavân.* They are the '*sanchâri'* or passing moods. Hence we shall not discuss them here. Rather, let us learn in detail about the primary *ras.* Those devotees, who wish to study the seven secondary *ras* in detail, are requested to read the 'Uttar-part' of Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu.

Shânta bhakti-ras

Definition of *shânta*-devotee

"Sri *Bhagavân* has stated with His Holy lips that, the *shânta*-devotee only knows His *swarup* and is firmly attached to Sri Krishna." (C.C.Madhya.19.173)

"A *shânta*-devotee does not feel Sri *Bhagavân* belongs to him. He knows only one fact – that He is Parabrahman and Paramâtmâ. The *shânta*-devotee is only aware of the original form of Sri *Bhagavân*." – (C.C.Madhya.19.177-178)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has written in his Priti-Sandarbha –

[1] For example – some devotees relish *ras* only as long as they are hearing the Harikatha. When the kathâ stops, they are back in the mundane world.
[2] These are the five principal *ras*

"The *shânta*-devotee is living on the borderline and his *bhakti* too is sitting on the margin. This means that a *shânta*-devotee is not exactly a devotee. His devotion does not fall inside the boundary of *bhakti.*" – (P.S.84.)

Sri Nârad-Pancharâtra describes –

"ananya mamatâ vishnou mamatâ premasangatâ,
bhaktirityuchyate bhishmaprahlâdoddhavanâradaih."

Meaning - "Mahâjans such as Bhishma, Prahlâd, Uddhav and Nârad have called it '*bhakti*' only when we do not feel anything or anyone else to be 'mine' – we know that Sri Vishnu alone is our sole possession and we love Him dearly."

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has stated –

"The *shânta*-devotees do not consider Sri *Bhagavân* as someone Whom they can call their 'own'. A relation with Sri *Bhagavân* is not inspired in their heart. Therefore it is logical that they do not feel a sense of belonging with respect to Him." – (P.S.96)

The servants and friends have a relation with Sri *Bhagavân*; hence they feel He belongs to them.

The *shânta*-devotees feel that Sri *Bhagavân* is *âtmârâm* and self-satisfied, hence He cannot feel hungry or thirsty. He is absolute in all respects, so how can He need any *sevâ*? Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has mentioned in Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu that the *shânta*-devotees are close to the *dâsya*-devotees. In fact the *dâsya*-devotees are the best friends of the *shânta*-devotees. He has quoted a *shânta*-devotee as saying –

"The supreme Brahman is a mass of fire while the living entity is its spark. He is intensely 'conscious' effulgence. When will I massage His feet?" – (B.R.S. 4.8.20)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd has explained this statement as follows –

"Here 'intense' implies the form of Sri *Bhagavân*, otherwise how can he mention 'feet'? 'Conscious' refers to '*sach-chidânanda*' (eternal, conscious[1] and blissful). Thus we see that the *shânta*-devotee's mind is firmly established in the Supreme Brahman Who is *sachchidânanda.*

Here we see that the *shânta*-devotee wants to massage Sri *Bhagavân's* feet – it is not because he wishes to please the Lord with his *sevâ*. Rather, he hopes to gratify his own senses by His touch. He wants to become happy by touching the beautiful form of Sri *Bhagavân*. On the other hand, the devotees who are in the mood of servants wish to serve the Lord to give Him pleasure. Hence they are *'bhaktas'* in the true sense."

What forms *ras* in the *shânta*-devotee?

"When a yogi heard the Pânchajanya[2], he was so overjoyed that the end of his robe fell to the ground. He shook his head and shed copious tears. He was full of goose bumps. All the vows he had undertaken broke. His regulative principles were lost. When the brilliant dark blue mascara-complexioned Lord appeared before him, he was so extremely happy and behaved in such a manner that displayed utter contempt for his own position (as that of a yogi)." – (B.R.S. 3.1.42)

Let us examine this case and determine which ingredients have come together to form *ras.* The *vibhâvs* (causes) are as follows –

- *vishayâlamban* – the subject of *ras* – the four-armed form of Parabrahman
- *âshrayâlamban* – the shelter of *ras* – the yogi who is in *shânta-ras*
- *uddipan* – what excites *ras* – the resounding Pânchajanya

What symptoms (*anubhâv*) did he show? The end of his cloth rolled on to the ground, he shook his head etc. He also displayed *sâtvik-bhâv* (not-so-loud symptoms) such as tears and goose bumps. His *sanchâri-bhâv* (passing moods) was joy, great surge of emotion.

[1] Someone who is truly conscious has to be blissful
[2] The powerful conch of Sri Krishna that He blew in the awake of the Kurukshetra war

What are the symptoms that the *shânta*-devotee expresses?

These *vibhâv, anubhâv, sâtvik* and *sanchâri* mingle with the permanent (*sthâyi-bhâv)* of the yogi[1] and create *shânta-bhakti-ras.* Then the yogi relishes this *ras*.

"They glorify the excellences of Sri *Bhagavân*, chant names such as Parabrahman, Paramâtmâ etc. They know that Brahman-realization is a blissful state; hence they show interest in Him. They concentrate on the tip of their nose; try to become *avadhuts*, practice *mudrâs* such as *gyân-mudrâ*.[2]
They bow and glorify Sri Hari. Their not-so-visible reactions are – tears, gooseflesh.

What arouses *ras* in them? The fact that Parabrahman is almighty, calm, impartial, and He can assume extraordinary forms.

Their passing moods (*sanchâri bhâv)* are – indifference, patience, joy, understanding, remembrance, sorrow, argumentative etc." – (P.S.203)

"krishna-nishthâ trishnâ-tyâg shânter dui gune"

Meaning - "The *shânta*-devotee has two qualities – he is steadfast in Sri Krishna and has given up the desire for material pleasures." – (C.C.)

We should realize that these two qualities are the basis for the other *ras* as well. This means, even though we may be situated in some other mood, it is necessary for us to possess these two qualities.

Dâsya-bhakti-ras

"The devotees in the *dâsya*-mood have two characteristics – they have the qualities of the *shânta*-devotee[3] as well as '*sevâ'*." – (C.C.Madhya.19.180)

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has called the *sthâyi-bhâv* of the *dâsya*-devotees as 'love mingled with awe'. He has stated –

"When we know someone to be our master, the slight trembling we feel in the heart is called 'awe'. When love mixes with this feeling we call it as '*sambhram-priti*' (love mingled with awe). The wise term this sense of 'love mingled with awe' as 'the mood of servitude' (*dâsya-bhâv*)." (B.R.S. 3.2.76)

Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says –

"In the *dâsya-bhâv* the devotee has the complete knowledge that Sri Krishna is God Almighty and considers Him as the Master." – (C.C.Madhya.19.178)

"When the devotee has *aishwarya-gyân* about Sri Krishna his love diminishes."

(C.C.Madhya.19.167)

However we find that the servants in Braja have a different mood from those of Dwârakâ and Vaikuntha. Priti-Sandarbha (208) says –

"Aishwarya-gyân is pre-dominant in the devotees such as Akrur, who are in *dâsya-bhâv,* while although devotees such as Uddhav too have *aishwarya-gyân*, it is mixed with *mâdhurya-gyân* and the *mâdhurya-gyân* is more prevalent in them. But we see that in Brajadhâm the servants are completely in the sweet mood. They simply respect Sri Krishna because they know Him as the Son of Nanda *Mahâ*râj (and not as God Almighty). They are aware that He has excellent qualities and that He is impressive."

"The Brijwâsis do not know that Sri Krishna is Ishwar.' – (C.C.Madhya.19.128)

Even the servants of Braja do not consider Sri Krishna as God, and therefore they do not hold Him in awe." – (C.C.Madhya.19.128)

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[1] The *sthâyi-bhâv* of the yogi is '*shânta-rati*'.
[2] To touch the tips of the thumb and the index finger.
[3] Steadfast in Sri Krishna-worship and forsaking material desires

Srimad-Bhâgavatam does not mention the servants such as Raktak and Patrak in Braja-*leelâ*. We do not know whether such names exist in the Vedic texts such as the Purân, Samhitâ or Tantra). The 10th *skandha* of Srimad-Bhâgavatam only describes the moods of *sakhya, vâtsalya* and *madhur*. Some subjects of Nanda *Mahâ*râj may have *dâsya-bhâv* for Sri Krishna and one may be eager to practice *sâdhanâ* under their guidance. However since Srimad-Bhâgavatam does not mention the names such as Raktak and Patrak, also it does not describe in detail the sort of *sevâ* they perform, it is very difficult to practice *Râgânugâ bhajan* in *dâsya-bhâv*. This is why Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita says –

"mor putra, mor sakhâ, mor prânapati,

eibhâbe jei more kore shuddhâ-bhakti."

Meaning - "The one thinks of me as 'my son', 'my friend' or 'my beloved' is practicing pure devotion."[1]

What excites *dâsya-bhâv*?

Thus we find that *sakhya, vâtsalya* and *madhur ras* are the main *Râgânugâ bhakti* in Braja.

When a devotee gets the dust of Sri Krishna's lotus feet, accepts *Mahâprasâd*, associates with the *dâs*-devotees, his *dâsya-bhâv* is excited.

What are the symptoms expressed by a *dâs*-devotee?

He performs *sevâ* according to what he is capable of, is steadfast in Sri Krishna-*bhajan* etc. His *sâtvik anubhâvs* (invisible symptoms) are stupefaction, tears etc. His passing or *sanchâri bhâv* are joy, pride, patience, indifference, humility, curiosity, surge of emotion.

"When Dâruk (Sri Krishna's charioteer) saw Sri Krishna in front of the main gate of Dwârakâ, he was unable even to fold his palms, and attained a very strange state." – (B.R.S. 3.2.135)

What forms *ras* in a *dâs*-devotee?

From this verse we ascertain the *vibhâv* as follows –

Sthâyi-bhâv – love mingled with awe, since he is a servant in Dwârakâ

The subject of love – Sri Krishna Who knows He is the protector

The shelter of love – Dâruk, who knows he is under Sri Krishna's protection

What excited *ras* in him – the vision of Sri Krishna at the main gate of Dwârakâ

Symptoms of *ras* – He gazed with reverence and tried to fold his palms

Sâtvik bhâv - He was unable to fold his palms; this indicates he was stupefied

Passing *bhâvs* – He was joyful, immobilized, shivering in thrill, eager to serve.

Thus we find that Dâruk was relishing remarkable *ras* when his Master Sri Krishna arrived suddenly after a very long period of absence. This mercy upon him was entirely unexpected and he relished many strange *bhâvs*.

Sakhya-bhakti-ras

"The devotees in friendly mood has three characteristics –

1. the qualities of the *shânta* devotee
2. the *sevâ* performed by the servants
3. The mood of non-difference between himself and Krishna is very strong in a *sakhâ* and the friend is devoid of awe and reverence.

A *sakhâ* climbs on Sri Krishna's shoulders and also lets Him climb on his; he plays as well as fights with Him. He serves Sri Krishna and takes service from Him[1]. He loves Sri Krishna more than the

[1] Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita mentions the relations such as son, friend and beloved, and not 'servant'.

shânta-devotee and the devotee in the mood of servitude. He considers Sri Krishna as non-different from Himself. In this manner the friend subjugates Sri Krishna. For this reason you can recognize *sakhya-ras* by the three above characteristics." – (C.C.Madhya.19.181-184)

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has termed *sakhya-bhakti-ras* as '*preyo-bhakti-ras' (preyo* = dear, loving).

"When two friends are nearly equal, they feel non-different from one another. They are devoid of awe and reverence. We call this relation as '*sakhya'*. They are in the mood of *'vishrambha*'. *'Vishrambha'* means very deep faith that lacks hesitation of any sort." – (B.R.S.)

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has described Sri Krishna Who is the subject of love in *sakhya ras*, as follows –

"Shyâmsundar is well-dressed, has all good qualities, He is strong, speaks so many extraordinary languages and is an expert at well-articulated speech. He is extremely learned, exceptionally talented, highly capable and kind. He is the bravest of all, witty, intelligent and forgiving. Sri Krishna loves all and is loved by everyone. He is upbeat, joyful and great to be around with."

All these qualities are arousing *ras* in the devotees belonging to the friendly mood.

"The *sakhâs* are the shelter (*âshray)* of this *ras* and they look handsome like Sri Krishna. They even dress like Him. Unlike the servants, they do not have the slightest inkling of hesitation. They only have very firm faith in Sri Krishna." – (B.R.S.)

Arjun, Bhimsen, the brahmin Sudâmâ are Sri Krishna's friends in Dwârakâ. Amongst them, Arjun is the closest. However, if we take all His friends into account[2], then the *sakhâs* of Braja are the topmost. They are the closest. How are these *sakhâs*?

"They are overcome with extreme grief if they don't see Shyâmsundar for just one moment. They want to play with Him always and Sri Krishna is their life and soul. Such are His Brijwâsi-*sakhâs*. They are the greatest of all His friends." – (B.R.S.)

Sri Krishna's Braja-*sakhâs* are of four types –

1. ***suhrit*** (companions)– These boys are slightly older to Sri Krishna. They hold weapons and are always trying to protect Him from bad men. E.g. – Subhadra, Mandalibhadra, Bhadra-vardhan, Gobhat, Indrabhat, Bhadrânga, Veerbhadra, *Mahâ*gun, Vijay, Balabhadra etc.
2. ***sakhâ*** (friends)– These friends are younger to Him and like to serve Him. Although they are definitely in the *sakhya*-mood, they have a whiff of *dâsya-ras* about them - They look up to Sri Krishna. Their names are as follows – Vishâl, Vrishabh, Ojaswi, Devaprastha, Varuthapa, Maranda, Kusumâpeeda, Manibandha, Karandham etc.
3. ***priya-sakhâ*** (dear friends)– They are equal to Sri Krishna in age and are in pure *sakhya-ras*. E.g. Shridâm, Sudâm[3], Dâm, Vasudâm, Kinkini, Stoka-Krishna, Amshu, Bhadrasen, Vilâsi, Pundarik, Vitanka, Kalavinka etc. These *sakhâs* please Sri Krishna by indulging in various friendly sports with Him. They have fisticuff-fights and stick-fights with Him. They joke and play pranks. Thus they give pleasure to Sri Krishna. Shridâm is the topmost in this category.
4. ***priya-narma-sakhâ*** (bosom friends)– They are greater than the *suhrit, sakhâ* and *priya-sakhâ.* They have a special *bhâv.* Their *bhâv* is laced with *sakhi-bhâv*. They help Sri Krishna to unite with the sweethearts. They are engaged in confidential services such as carrying messages between the lovers and helping in secret meetings. Therefore we call them *priya-narma-sakhâs*. E.g. Subal, Arjun[4], Gandharva, Vasanta, Ujjwal, Mandhumangal etc. Amongst them, Subal and Ujjwal are the closest to Sri Krishna.

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[1] A friend even orders Sri Krishna to serve Him
[2] Of Vraja, Mathurâ and Dwârakâ
[3] He is a friend in Vraja; we should not confuse him with Sudâmâ-the-brahmin as mentioned in Srimad-Bhâgavatam. The Sudâmâ in Srimad-Bhâgavatam is also sometimes called Shridâm.
[4] He is a *gopa*-boy and not to be confused with Arjun-the-Pândav

What arouses *sakhya-ras* ?

Sri Krishna's age, beauty, flute, cow-horn (a type of musical instrument), jokes, witty repartees, talents, the way He mimics kings and the incarnations of God.

Visible symptoms or activities of a devotee in *sakhya-ras* are as follows – wrestling, playing throw-ball, dice-game and various other boyish sports.

The silent activities (*sâtvik*) are – stupefaction, perspiration.

The passing *bhâvs* are laughter etc.

Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has explained with a concrete example –

"Mukunda looked as handsome as a mass of cloud illuminated by the star 'Swâti'. When He loudly commenced the festival of sports by blowing sweetly, yet forcefully into the enchanting flute, there was a shower of jubilation all around. In this joy, Shridâm's body, that resembled an exquisite pearl-oyster, expressed little droplets of perspiration that gleamed like pearls." – (B.R.S. 3.3.98)[1]

The *vibhâvs* (cause of *ras)* are as follows –

- *Sthâyi-bhâv* - the passionate mood called *'vishrambha'* which exists only in Braja
- The subject of love – Sri Krishna
- The shelter of love – Shridâm
- What excites *ras* – the song of the flute

Anubhâv – activities expressed by the devotee - boyish-sports

Sâtvik – perspiration

Passing *bhâvs* – joy, playfulness

The *Mahâ*jan has thus described the *sakhya–ras* –

"jamunâr tire kânâi shridâmere loiyâ,
mâthâmâthi ron kore shrama-jukto hoiyâ.
prakhar robir tâpe shukâilo mukh,
dekhi shob sakhâgoner mone hoilo duhkh.
âr nâ khelibo bhâi cholo jâi ghare,
sakâle jâite mâ kohiyâchhe shobâre.
molin hoilo kânâi mukhâni tomâr,
dekhiyâ bidore hiyâ âmâ shobâkâr.
beli abasân hoilo cholo ghare jâi,
ithe balarâm dur bone gelo gâi."

Meaning - "Kânâi locked horns with Shridâm on the banks of the Yamunâ and both of them fought vigorously – so much so – that they were bathed with perspiration from head to toe. The scorching heat of the sun burnt Sri Krishna's face. When the *sakhâs* saw this they were overcome with grief. (They love Him so much!!) Out of concern for Him, they stopped the game and said – "We shall not play any more, brothers, come, let's go home". In stead of revealing the true reason for wanting to return, they simply said – "Mother Yashomati has told all of us to go home early today. Why, my dear Kânâi, Your face has turned so pale!! Our hearts are bleeding, seeing You thus!! Anyway, the sun is about to set, come, let's go home. Look, Balarâm has gone far and the cows too have wandered deep into the forest – if we wait any longer, it will get dark, and then, how will we collect them?" (This implies that – Kamsa's emissaries may attack us any moment. Then what will we do? Since Balarâm, Who can protect us, too has gone far. Once again, this proves the lack of '*aishwarya-gyân*' in the Braja-*sakhâs*.)

[1] It is a myth that pearl oysters open up when the Swâti has ascended in the sky, and if it rains, and if a rain-drop enters the oyster, then a pearl is born. Here Srila Rupa Goswâmipâd has described Sri Krishna as the cloud under the Swâti star, His captivating flute-notes as the shower of rain, Shridâm's body as the pearl-oyster and his perspiration as the pearls born due to the shower (mellifluous song of the flute).

Vâtsalya-bhakti-ras

"The devotee in *vâtsalya-ras* has 4 *ras*-qualities –

1. the qualities of the *shânta*-devotee
2. the *sevâ* of the servant – as a parent the *sevâ* comprises of love, care and protection.
3. the qualities of the *sakhâ*, namely, no self-consciousness and no awe and reverence,
4. love is much more in this *ras,* hence the devotee scolds and beats Sri Krishna. He considers himself as the protector and thinks he is responsible for Him.

Since the devotee in *vâtsalya-ras* has all the above qualities, this *ras* is as delicious as nectar."
– (C.C.Madhya.19.185-187)

Vâtsalya-rati is the permanent (*sthâyi-bhâv*) of the devotee in *vâtsalya-ras*. Sri Krishna is the subject of this *ras.* How is He?

"He is soft, dark and serene like a garland of fresh blue lotuses. His eyes are shaped like lotus-petals and their corners are playing restlessly. His thick black eyelashes resemble black bees hovering around the lotus (His eyes). When Vrajeshwari Mother Yashodâ saw her beautiful son playing in the dust of Braja, she wet her body with milk that flowed involuntarily from her breasts." (B.R.S. 3.4.3)

Thus Sri Krishna, Who is dark, handsome, endowed with excellent qualities, soft, sweet-spoken, simple, innocent, well-mannered, respectful and kind, is the subject of this *ras.*

The Queen of Braja (Yashodâ-mâtâ), Rohini-mâtâ, the Aunties, the *Gopis* whose sons Brahmâji had stolen, Devaki, her co-wives, Kunti, Vasudev, Sândipani Muni (His teacher) and other elders are the shelter of this *ras*. This list is arranged in descending order of love.

What excites *vâtsalya ras*? The child-form, childish beauty and attire, babyish pranks, sweet speech, smile and *leelâs*.

What are the reactions of a devotee in this *ras?* She kisses Sri Krishna's forehead, caresses Him, blesses Him, and commands Him. She bathes Him, cares for Him and instructs Him about His welfare. A devotee in *vâtsalya ras* also displays 9 types of silent reactions - 8 of them being stupefaction etc. and an additional one – milk flowing from the breasts.

The passing moods are – joy, strong emotion, eagerness.

The *sthâyi-bhâv* of the devotee mingles with *vâtsalya-rati* and becomes *vâtsalya-ras*. An example of this *ras* –

Yashodâ and Rohini were so full of love for Gopâl that milk would flow spontaneously from their breasts. He would get covered with dirt from head to toe – this was His *anga-râg*[1] - yet they would pick up both beautiful babies (Krishna and Balarâm) onto their laps. Then they would breast-feed Them. When the babies would suckle, the mothers would gaze lovingly at Their enchanting smile that revealed few tiny teeth. This would immerse them in supreme bliss." – (B.R.S. 108.23)

In this verse the ingredients of *ras* are as follows –

Vibhâv –

- *Sthâyi-bhâv* – the devotee should have a passion called '*vâtsalya*'.
- The subject of *ras* – Sri Krishna and Baladev who are crawling.
- The shelter of *ras* – Mothers Yashodâ and Rohini.
- *Uddipan* – what excites *ras* – the childish age of Sri Krishna and Balarâm, sweet smile, childish pranks.

Reactions of *ras* – the devotee caresses, pets, kisses the forehead and wipes the dust off His body

The silent reactions of the devotee – tears, goose bumps, breasts overflowing with milk

The passing moods of the devotee – joy, *âveg*, eagerness.

[1] Beautiful colorful decoration

The Mahâjan has described Vrajeshwari Mother Yashodâ's *vâtsalya ras* so sweetly –

"Her heart burnt in anguish and torrential tears flowed from her eyes, while her heart was shattered in grief – how would He go to the woods (to graze the cattle)? Why, He didn't even know the house and its surroundings well till now! How could a mother bear such sorrow?

O my dearest, O the darling of the Yâdavs[1], is there no wealth at home that you should step in the woods? Let the other cowherd boys take the cattle.

I have no one else to call my own and no support but You. You are my only darling, how can you bear to leave me and let my life be engulfed in darkness?

You are only a suckling babe, and you want to go to the forest with the cows? How can I rest in peace at home?

O my dear, Your body is as soft as butter – why, the sun will melt You and You will be finished!! The mere thought of this makes my heart tremble! The sun is soaring overhead and the mercury is rising high; it is pouring fire – how will my little one survive?

The grasses are so huge – each one is like a spear! They will pierce your soft skin like anything! Your feet are like velvet flowers, how will You run when they enter Your feet?

When the Gem of Gokul (Gokul-*mani*) heard His mother weep so pathetically, He tried to console her in so many ways – He said – Mother, please do not grieve, I have nothing to fear for after all, I have this Shekhar Roy (poet) to accompany me."

Madhur-bhakti-ras

"A devotee in *madhur ras* five characteristics in all –

1. she is steadfast in her attachment to Sri Krishna (like a *shânta*-devotee)
2. extreme *sevâ* (of the *dâs*-devotee)
3. the unhesitating (frank) behavior of the *sakhâ*
4. caring and protecting attitude of the *vâtsalya* devotee
5. over and above she serves Sri Krishna by offering her body.

Just as the five elements (sky, air, fire, water and earth) have the qualities of the previous elements, and ultimately the earth has all the five characteristics, similarly the *madhur*-devotee has a beautiful conglomeration of all the qualities of the devotees in other *ras.* Therefore this *ras* has much more relish and it tastes extraordinarily wonderful!" – (C.C.Madhya.19.189-192)

The ingredients of *madhur ras* –

***Vibhâvs* –**

- the object of *ras* – the unparalleled Sri Krishna Who is the Chief of the *vidagdhas*. Example – "Dear *sakhi*, Sri Hari is gladdening the hearts of all the *Gopis* by entertaining them with His body that is softer and darker than the blue lotus; thus He is pleasuring them with a Feast of Love. Every part of His body is freely embraced by the Braja-beauties – thus He is looking all the more charming. In this manner He is sporting in this spring season like Eros personified." – (Geet-Govindam)

"The maidens of Braja appear exquisitely sweet and new each moment; every tendency of their heart is a wave of love and they adore Him as their Beloved – I pay obeisance to such remarkable Braja-*kishoris.*" – (B.R.S. 3.5.6)

Although the queens of Dwârakâ and women like Kubjâ (in Mathurâ) too have *kântâ-bhâv* (the mood of a sweetheart), the Braja-beauties are in *parakiyâ*-mood, and they are the greatest of all sweethearts.

"Amongst them, Srimati Râdhârâni, Who is the crest-jewel of all Braja-*bâlâs*, is the topmost."[2] – (B.R.S.)

[1] Cattle herdsmen
[2] "preyaseeshu harerâsu pravarâvârshabhânavi"

"Sri Krishna is the embodiment of love and so a devotee entirely subjugates Him with his love. Also the *gopikâs* are very mature where pure *prem-ras* is concerned. After all there is no *rasâbhâs-dosh*[1]*,* in the love of the *Gopikâs.* Hence they are able to satisfy Sri Krishna supremely.

One group of *Gopis* is '*vâmâ*' (crooked) while the other group is '*dakshinâ'* (generous, straight etc.). They make Sri Krishna relish *ras* in many ways. Amongst all these *Gopis*, Srimati Râdhâ Thâkurâni is the topmost, for She is the treasure-mine of crystal pure dazzling love. She is '*madhyamâ*' in age and balanced in nature. Her love is immensely intense and so She is constantly '*vâmâ*'. Due to this, She is always going into *mân*, and this creates huge waves in Sri Krishna's ocean-like bliss." – (C.C.Madhya.17.156-157, 159-162)

How is Srimati Râdhârâni's beauty?

"Her eyes steal the beauty of an inebriated *chakori*[2], Her face stifles the glory of the full moon, Her immensely exquisite beauty makes super-pure gold feel very much ashamed of its brilliance – look, there is Sri Râdhâ – the One Who contains all sweetness of the Nectar." – (B.R.S.)

What excites ***madhur ras*? *(uddipan vibhâv)***

Sri Hari's and His sweethearts'

- qualities,
- names,
- characteristics,
- decoration,
- associated elements and
- some marginal objects – all arouse this *ras.*

Qualities - They are divided into three –

1. physical quality – age, looks, *lâvanya*, beauty, sweetness etc.
2. verbal quality – sweet speech that delights the auditory sense is the 'verbal quality'.
3. mental quality – gratefulness, forgiveness and kindness are the mental qualities.

Names - Sweet sounds such as 'Râdhâ' and 'Krishna' are the 'names' that excite *ras* in a devotee of *madhur ras.*

Characteristics – We can categorize them into two – (1) *anubhâv* (2) *leelâ.* We shall discuss the '*anubhâv*' separately, since it is a long topic. Here let us see the *leelâs* that arouse *madhur ras*. Sri Krishna's characteristics are – playing the flute, *Râs*-sports, ball-game. Srimati Râdhârâni's characteristics are – graceful-ness, playing the *veenâ*, music, cooking.

Decoration - It is of 4 types –

1. clothes
2. ornaments
3. flower-garlands
4. unguents

Associated elements - We can classify them into two –

1. *lagna*[3] – Sri Krishna's *lagna* are – the flute-song, sound of the horn, singing, body-fragrance etc. Srimati Râdhârâni's *lagna* are – song of the *veenâs*, music and body-fragrance.
2. *sannihita*[4] – Sri Krishna's *sannihita* are – flower-garland, *gunjâ-mâlâ*, saffron anointments. Srimati Râdhârâni's *sannihita* are – flower-garlands, *veenâ*, dear friends such as Lalitâ and Sri Râdhâkund.

[1] This is considered as the most terrible flaw in *ras*. It means when something comes up in a *ras*-presentation (or *ras*-relish), that closely resembles *ras*, but it is not so. It is an imitation of the real thing and is highly abhorrent.
[2] She-*chakor* (bird)
[3] Things you cannot separate from Him.
[4] Those things that are close to Him, but can be separated from Him.

Some marginal objects – moonlight, clouds, lightning, spring season, sharad season, full moon, breeze, peacocks, cuckoo, he-parrot and she-parrot.

What are the reactions of a devotee in ***madhur ras* (*Anubhâv*)**?

In *madhur ras* we have three types of *anubhâvs* – *alankâr, udbhâswar, vâchik*

1. *Alankâr*[1] – The commonly maidens are at the height of youthfulness, and they are always absorbed in their life and soul – that is – Sri Krishna. Their heart is attacked with all sorts of *bhâvs*, called '*alankâr*'. We can list twenty *alankârs* –

1. *hâv*[2],
2. *bhâv*[3],
3. *helâ*[4],
4. beauty,
5. splendor,
6. glow,
7. sweetness,
8. *pragalbhatâ (prâgalbhya)*[5],
9. generosity,
10. patience,
11. *leelâ*[6],
12. love-dalliance,
13. *vichchhitti*[7],
14. *vibhram*[8],
15. *kilakinchit*[9],
16. *mottâyita*[10],
17. *kuttumita*[11],
18. *bibbok*[12],
19. *lalit*[13] and
20. *vikrita*[14].

Stupefaction and surprise are two additional *alankârs*.

[1] The literal meaning is 'jewellery'. These are actually *bhâv*s that are so beautiful and loving that they entice Sri Krishna instantly, just like jewellery makes an ordinary girl appear beautiful and attracts a mundane 'lover'.
[2] It is a mood in which one turns the neck and moves the eye-brows and the eyes; it is more expressive than the mood called '*bhâv'*. – (U.N.11.9-10)
[3] When one is in the erotic *ras*, and a seed called '*rati*' or passion appears in the heart, and then certain feelings occur where there was none earlier – we call it '*bhâv'*. – (U.N.11.6)
[4] When *'hâv*' clearly indicates erotic desire then we call it '*helâ'*. – (U.N.11.11)
[5] When a sweetheart has no qualms regarding love-making; adopts a carefree attitude. – (U.N.11.21)
[6] To dress up attractively and imitate the beloved's actions – (U.N.11.28)
[7] To wear just one simple ornament and yet look beautiful. E.g. Srimati Râdhârâni wore an earring made of a rosy mango-leaf (newly-budding) that quivered in the breeze; this looked so novel that it charmed Mukunda immensely and His lotus-face became exultant.
[8] When a Vraja-*bâlâ* is extremely eager to meet her lover, she puts all the ornaments in the wrong places – we call this as '*vibhram'*.
[9] A mood where joy is predominant. However it is mingled with arrogance, desire, tears, smile, malevolence, fear and anger – all expressed simultaneously.
[10] In this mood, the Vraja-*gopi* reminisces about her Beloved and reveals the feelings in her heart.
[11] When Sri Krishna kisses or touches Srimati Râdhârâni's breasts, She is happy within, yet expresses anger externally – the wise call it '*kuttumita*'.
[12] Sometimes in spite of getting what she desires, a *Gopi* disregards it – this may be due to (a) over-arrogance or (b) *mân*. We call it '*bibbok*'.
[13] Very soft gestures and love-play of the eye-brows; Govinda is an expert in this mood.
[14] Not revealing the feeling in one's heart, due to shyness, *mân* and jealousy, yet the lover cannot conceal his feeling, since it gets expressed through some other way. E.g. When Sri Krishna sought a date with a Vraja *devi*, she refused, yet her cheeks manifested gooseflesh and looked very beautiful.

2. *Udbhâswar* – loud reactions of a devotee in *madhur ras* – the sweetheart's skirt-string loosens, her *uttariya (dupattâ*)[1] falls, she stretches the upper body, yawns, flares the nostrils, sighs heavily, rolls on the earth, sings, does not care for the public, spins around and hiccoughs; these are the *udbhâswar* reactions.
3. *Vâchik* – verbal reactions of a devotee in this *ras* – there are 12 in all – *âlâp*[2], *vilâp*[3], *samlâp*[4], *pralâp*[5], *anulâp*[6], *apalâp*[7], *sandesh*[8], *atidesh*[9], *apadesh*[10], *upadesh*[11], *nirdesh*[12] and *vyâpadesh*[13].

The devotee expresses all the eight *sâtvik bhâvs* such as stupefaction, perspiration, gooseflesh etc. A devotee can express any one of the 5 levels in *sâtvik bhâv* – they are as follows –

1. *dhumâyita* – expressed when the devotee is in the stage of *bhâv* or *rati*.
2. *jwalita* – when the devotee is in the stage of *prem.*
3. *deepta* – expressed in the stage of *sneha*, *mân, pranay, râg* and *anurâg.*
4. *uddipta* – in the stage of *rudha-Mahâbhâv*.
5. *suddipta* – in the last stage, that is *Mohanâkhya-Mahâbhâv*. Only Srimati Râdhârâni manifests this *bhâv* called '*suddipta sâtvik bhâv*'. Explanation –

"Srimati Râdhârâni heard Sri Krishna's magical flute and was absorbed in *suddipta-sâtvik-bhâv*. Sri Vishâkhâ and Vrindâ *devi* are describing Her state at that moment to Govinda as follows – 'Dear Mâdhav, A most amazing incident has occurred! When Sri Râdhâ heard the song of Your flute, She has entered such a state that the students have mistaken Her to be an idol of Goddess Saraswati and have started worshipping Her. (This indicates that Ishwari has become excessively stupefied and pale, since Goddess Saraswati is white in color). Aho! Sri Râdhâ perspired so much that we felt as if it was the monsoon season[14]! She wept so profusely that the cattle quenched their thirst, drinking Her tears! She is so covered with gooseflesh from head to toe, that She looks as if flower-buds have sprouted all over Her body." – (U.N.)

What are the *vyâbhichâri bhâv* or passing moods of a devotee in *madhur ras*? "A devotee expresses The 33 types of *vyâbhichâri bhâv* (such as *nirved* etc.), other than *ougra* and lethargy."

– (B.R.S.)

Srimati Râdhârâni manifests all the *bhâvs* to the maximum extent and these *bhâvs* make Her all the more attractive. For instance when Srimati Râdhârâni feels proud of Her good fortune, She reveals it in the following manner –

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[1] A cloth used by Indian women to cover their blouse.
[2] Words of flattery E.g. Although Sri Krishna called the *Gopis* for the *râs*-dance, when they came; He rejected them, since He wanted to hear their sweet words. He pretended to be indifferent. Yet, the Gopis, due to their *anurâg*, they thought He is very rare to obtain and started flattering Him. This is '*âlâp'*.
[3] lamentation
[4] A two-way conversation
[5] Futile talk
[6] Repeated utterances
[7] pun
[8] A message sent to one's beloved who has traveled far
[9] It means "his statement is my statement" – e.g. – Sri Krishna begged Lalitâ and pleased her so that she would get Srimati Râdhârâni out of Her *mân*. Although Lalitâ assured Him, He would not believe her. Then Vrindâ said – "dear Vrajendra-Nandan, You are simply at all doubting Lalitâ's words. Do You not know that Lalitâ is expressing what is concealed in Râdhâ's heart externally, like a *veenâ.*
[10] When one indirectly informs about something - e.g. after love-making, Shyâmalâ was roaming unabashedly in front of her elders. Her *sakhi* commented – "This young sweet girl is carrying two round fruits, and although they have been bitten by some bird, they look resplendent. Also I can see she is wearing two red flowers that have been tasted by the black-bee." Shyâmalâ understood her friend was referring to the marks on her breasts and lips, and covered them.
[11] Instruction to impart teaching
[12] talks like "she is so-and-so, I am so-and-so"
[13] To express one's desire in an indirect manner.
[14] The perspiration sprang out of Her body like torrential rains and wet the surrounding; so the sakhis felt as if the monsoon season had arrived in India.

"Srimati Râdhârâni was feeling proud of Her good fortune. As a result She pretended to be so much engrossed in making a *kundal,* that, as if She did not notice Govinda at all. Lalitâ told Her – Dear *sakhi*, this person, Hari, has forsaken all His *sakhâs*, has disregarded even sweethearts such as Chandrâvali and He is standing at Your doorstep gazing fixedly at Your face alone ! On the other hand, You are smiling and continuing to be busy arranging a crocodile-shaped earring[1] with jasmine flowers sewn inside a bunch of flowers! You are not glancing at Him even with the corner of Your eyes!" - (U.N.)

Thus we see that how sweetly Ishwari expresses even pride, which is otherwise considered a negative quality.

A devotee's *sthâyi-bhâv* mingles with *vibhâvs* such as these and transform into *Madhur-bhakti-ras*. Again this *madhur-ras* (also called *Ujjwal-ras* or brilliant *ras*) can be classified into two –

"*sa vipralambhah sambhoga iti dwedhojjwalo matah."*

Meaning - "*Madhur ras* or erotic *ras* is categorized into two – *vipralambha* (separation) and *sambhog* (union)." – (U.N.)

Vipralambha can be of 4 types –

1. *purva-râg* (before meeting)
2. *mân* (love-quarrel)
3. *prem-vaichittya*[2]
4. *pravâs*[3]

They enhance the *ras* of union and we can relish them separately as '*ras*' also.

Let us relish an example of *Purva-râg ras*. The *sakhis* saw Srimati Râdhârâni's extraordinary *bhâv* during *purva-râg* and said –

"O Râdhe! You are coming and going constantly! And You are standing outside the threshold a hundred times! You seem so agitated and Your sighs are heavy – all You do is to glance at the *Kadamba*-woods.

Oh Râi! Why are behaving so?

Do You not fear the evil elders? What shall we do if they find out?

You are so restless that You cannot even manage Your *dupattâ*. While being seated, You suddenly get a start and Your robe falls off. You are hardly in Your teens and moreover are You not a princess? In addition, You are a girl of prestigious ancestry! What desire do You wish to satisfy that You are stretching out Your hand so greedily? We cannot understand what game You are up to.

We feel You are extending Your hand towards the moon. Poet Chandidâs says – I guess the 'Black-snare[4]' has captured You!"

Now let us study the various ingredients of *ras* (such as *vibhâv* etc.) in the above situation. We remember that *vibhâv* comprises of *sthâyi-bhâv*, the subject of *ras*, the shelter of *ras* and what excites *ras.* They are as follows –

- *sthâyi-bhâv – Madhur rati* called '*vipralambha'* (separation)
- the subject of *ras* – Sri Krishna Who is the *dheer-lalit*[5] lover.
- The shelter of love – Srimati Râdhârâni Who is in the stage of *Purva-râg*.
- *Uddipan* (What excites *ras*) – the sight of the *Kadamba*-trees.

Anubhâv (the visible reaction of the devotee in this *ras*) – coming in and out of the house repeatedly.

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[1] This indicates that Srimati Râdhârâni is making the ear-ring solely for Her Beloved Sri Shyâmsundar
[2] Even though her beloved may be near, the sweetheart is miserable since she is afraid of separation.
[3] Separation due to traveling.
[4] The snare of black-magic cast by the dark-complexioned Shyâmsundar
[5] A lover who is *vidagdha*, youthful, witty, free of any tension, and is usually subjugated by His sweetheart. Sri Krishna is a perfect example of this *bhâv*.

Sâtvik (not-so-visible reactions) – tears, turning pale.

Sanchâri (passing moods) – *âveg*, depression, stress.

The Mahâjan has drawn a very clear picture of *madhur-ras* during the separation called '*pravâs*' –

"New flowers blossomed in the woods and the flower-groves, while the she-cuckoo sang on the top of her voice, oh my!

The sweet *chandan*-scented breeze is blowing while the frost has receded to the mountain tops; yet my Beloved has not returned home – oh dear!

The moon is scorching my *chandan*-like body more than sun ever does, while the honey bees sing in the garden. The spring has arrived, yet my sweetheart remains far – what can I do if fate has turned against me?

I gaze transfixed at Kânu's face, yet my eyes are not quenched. My poor heart must indeed be like a rock - otherwise how can it continue to suffer like this when the time is so happy?

Day by day I am drying up like a fragile lotus-bud in the snow – I don't know where it all will end. Poet Vidyâpati says – shame! Oh shame on such a life! Mâdhav's conduct is the height of cruelty!"

The *vibhâvs* are as follows –

- *Sthâyi-bhâv – madhur-rati* called separation due to '*pravâs*'.
- The subject (*vishay*) of *ras* – Sri Krishna Who has gone to Mathurâ.
- The shelter of *ras* – *Virahini* Srimati Râdhârâni.
- *Uddipan* – the spring season, the song of the cuckoo, sweet-scented breeze, humming of the bees, moonlit night.

Anubhâv – crying loudly, not caring what others will think.
Sâtvik bhâv – tears, shivering, paleness, fainting.
Sanchâri bhâv – indifference, depression, humility, eagerness, lunacy, illusion.

Sambhog-ras

Let us relish *sambhog-ras* in brief.

"He caught her hand, eager to make love. They locked hands, gazing into each other's eyes with passion.

He was adamant and wanted to touch Her body - he was so full of desire. But Râi shook Her head in refusal. She said, "No, no." Râi was displaying a novel mood of passion[1], whereas Shyâm was advancing in the mood of an elephant-at-war. She was hesitating to return the kiss, and closed Her eyes, yet when He drank the nectar of Her lips, She moaned.

When His nails dug into Her, my Precious Râi gave a start, and a current ran across Her body just when He bit Her softly. She started prattling in a choked voice. She forgot Herself completely and craziness swept over Her. Just then She controlled Herself and stopped being generous. Says poet Gobinda dâs – this is the limit of *ras*!"

What are the ingredients of *ras* here?

The *vibhâvs* –

- *Sthâyi-bhâv – madhur-rati* called *sambhog* (union)
- The subject of *ras* – Sri Krishna Who is *dheer-lalita* lover, *vidagdha* and at the threshold of youth.
- The shelter of love – sweet, *vidagdha*, the crest-jewel of all experts at love-making – Srimati Râdhârâni, Who has come of age.
- *Uddipan* – the love-grove, humming of the bees etc.

Anubhâv – pulling the veil on the face, arching the body.

Sâtvik bhâv – choking of the voice, goose bumps etc.

[1] By adopting a defensive attitude

Sanchâri – bashfulness, surge of emotion, fear (that someone will come to know about the relation).

Thus we see how the *vibhâv*, *anubhâv*, *sâtvik* and *sanchâri bhâvs* are like fragrant blossoms that have mingled with *madhur-rati* and formed *sambhog-ras*, like a sweet bouquet. When we, the *sâdhak*-devotees, relish such wonderful poems that contain the *ras* of a Braja-*bâlâ's* feelings, this sweetness is transmitted through us. Then we also feel blessed to relish the delectable *sambhog-ras* of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhav.

* Jay Sri Radhe *

glossary

Abbreviations

L	Latin
Swami	Srila Shridhar Swâmi
J	Srila Jiva Goswâmi
Chandra	Chaitanya-Chandrâmritam
SA	Srinivâs Âchârya
GG	Geet-Govindam
GL	Govinda-Lilâmritam
BG	Bhagavad-Gitâ
BRS	Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu
UN	Ujjwal-Neelmani
AC	Ânanda-Vrindâban-Champuh
GC	Gopâl-Champuh
Tattva	Tattva-Sandarbha
VM	Vidagdha-Mâdhav drama
AK	Alankâr-Koustubh
NC	Nâtak-Chandrikâ
PS	Priti-Sandarbha

	A
âptakâm	Liberated (B.M.2.7.51); full of bliss due to divine experience and hence is satiated (Govinda Bhâshyam 4.2.12); one whose all desires have been satisfied.
âtmârâm	Rejoicing in one's self or in the supreme spirit.
abhisâr	Rendezvous of lovers (Sâhitya Darpan)
aham-grahopâsanâ	It is a path of worship in which we think we have merged into God, and that He is I and I am He. (Gita.9.15; Priti-sandarbha,108)
aishwarya-gyân	When we have a feeling of awe and reverence for Sri Bhagavân, think Him to be glorious, majestic and all-powerful, then we are said to have 'aishwarya-gyân'. (C.C.Adi.3.16).
anubhâv	An activity or symptom that follows the arousal of bhâv.
anurâg	1. rosy ness (Vidagdga-Mâdhav drama) 2. A stage of love in which, although the lovers experience each other always, they still feel that the beloved is ever-new, and as if they are meeting for the first time. (Ujjwal-Neelmani.14.146)
apavarga	1. The destroyer (Shridhar Swami in Srimad-Bhâgavatam.1.7.22) 2. liberation 3. Bhakti (Srimad-Bhâgavatam.10.51.55, Priti-sandarbha.16) 4. The ultimate end (Shridhar Swami in Srimad Bhâgavatam.5.14) 5. Liberation from terrible suffering (commentary in Siddhânta-ratnam)
archanam	Activities that involve invoking our worshiped Deity and serving Him. According to great souls such as Nârad Muni, the devotees should most certainly establish a relation with Sri Bhagavân by taking deekshâ, and after deekshâ, we must indeed perform archanam. For householders who own wealth and property, archanam is the main path to serve the Lord. In stead, if they resort to meditation alone like the penniless renunciates, then they fall under the category 'monetary fraud'. If we make others perform archanam on our behalf, it displays laziness. We are not allowed to eat in a house where Keshav is not worshiped. (Bhakti-Sandarbha.283).
	B
bhagavân	1. The One Who has absolute knowledge, power, renunciation, majesty, valor and effulgence (Srimad-Bhâgavatam.2.9.30)

	2. The Lord of Vaikuntha has three-fold majesty and He is 'purna' or 'complete incarnation'; however Sri Krishna has four-fold majesty and He is 'purnatama' or the 'most complete'. Therefore, He is Swayam Bhagavân or God Himself (Srinivâs Âchârya).
bhakti	1. Love (Shridhar Swami in Srimad-Bhâgavatam.12.3.25) 2. sevâ (Gopâl-Champuh, Purva,23.84) 3. adoration (Bhakti-Sandarbha 172) 4. Practicing devotion unto Sri Bhagavân without expecting any material or spiritual benefit (Bhakti-Sandarbha 169) 5. To be steadfast in sevâ (Sri Brihad-hâgavatâmritam.2.7.14)
bhâv	Bhakti (Shridhar Swami in Srimad-Bhâgavatam.1.5.22); love (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd in Srimad-Bhâgavatam.2.4.4); intention (Shridhar Swami in Srimad-Bhâgavatam.3.15.4); tendency (Srimad-Bhâgavatam.10.45.33); deep attachment (Srimad-Bhâgavatam.4.8.21); State; condition; true condition or state (Ananda-Vrindâvan-Champuh.13.8.); manner of being; nature or temperament; manner of acting or behavior; way of thinking or feeling; sentiment; opinion; disposition; to make a firm resolution; love; affection; attachment; wanton sport; dalliance; advice; instruction; contemplation; meditation, engrossment.
bhram	Stating an object to be what it is not. (Sarva-samvâdini, Tattva 9)
	C
châtak	The Pied Cuckoo, Pied Crested Cuckoo, or Jacobin Cuckoo, Clamator jacobinus, is a member of the cuckoo order of birds, the Cuculiformes, which also includes the roadrunners, the anis, and the Hoatzin. It breeds in Africa south of the Sahara Desert eastwards to India, Sri Lanka and Burma. It is a short-distance migrant, since birds at more northerly latitudes and on higher ground are summer visitors, leaving for warmer and wetter areas in winter**.**The Pied Cuckoo takes a variety of insects and caterpillars. It is a noisy species, with a persistent and loud pipew pipew pipew call. In India we see it just before the monsoon and it disappears after the rainy season. Therefore we call it the 'harbinger of rain'. Mythology says that the châtak drinks water directly from the rainfall, and it remains thirsty until then. Consequently a very eager devotee pining for the Lord is compared to a châtak.
chitta	Sub-conscious mind
	D
devatâ kânda	Those parts of the scriptures that deal with the worship of devâtâs.
dhammila	A kind of bhâv
dharma	Duties performed according to *varna* and *âshram* (Chandra.22.); Devotion unto the Supreme Being (S.B.10.1.2); the nature of an object; daily activities (Sri Jiva Goswâmi); behavior (B.B.1.4.100); Lord Vishnu (Shridhar Swami in Srimad-Bhâgavatam.3.1.36.); justice (J in S.B.10.84.43); to perform pure devotion solely with the intention please Sri Bhagavân (S.B.1.1.2).
dhira adhirâ	When one's emotions are in control as well as out of control.
	G
gunâvatâr	Brahmâ, Vishnu and Shiv appear from the second Purush-incarnation (Garbhodakashâyi Vishnu) in order to create, sustain and destroy the universe. They are the sources of rajah, sattva and tamah attributes (gunas) respectively. Therefore we call them *gunâvatârs*.
guru pranâli	A list that of the names of the Spiritual Masters according to correct disciplic succession along with their siddha-swarups.
gyân	1. to arrive at a conclusion using logic (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd) 2. knowledge pertaining to the path of liberation or moksha (Srinivâs Âchârya)
gyân-kânda	Those parts of the Vedas that deal with 'gyân'.
	H

hasti-snân	After bathing nicely in a river, an elephant comes out of the water and sprinkles dust over his body. This is called 'hasti-snân' or 'elephant-bath'. If. After bathing in the all-purifying River Gangâ, one continues to sin, then such a bath is of no use. It is as good as 'hasti-snân'.
	J
jap	Mantra (Swami in Srimad-Bhâgavatam 4.8.47); to utter a mantra very softly (Bhakti Rasâmrita Sindhu1.2.149); to whisper secretively (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 10.56.16);
	K
kâmânugâ	The eagerness to follow in the path of 'kamrupâ-bhakti'. (Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu.1.2.297). Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu(1.2.283) explains Kâmrupâ-bhakti as "a type of bhakti in which, although the devotee has erotic desires for Sri Krishna, her intention is to please Him. The Brajadevis alone poossess Kâmrupâ-bhakti. Here the word 'kâm' refers to pure and brilliant love."
kahlâr	The white-lily
karanâpâtav	In spite of studying a object or phenomenon attentively, we are unable to arrive at the truth because our sense organs have limited capacity – this is called 'karanâpâtav flaw'. (Sarva-Samvâdini, tattva 9)
karma	1. pious and impious deeds (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 5.10.7) 2. destiny (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 5.11.11) 3. When a person who feels incomplete, attempts to make himself complete. (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd)
karma kânda	Those parts of the scriptures that deal with 'karma'.
kilakinchit	When seven moods, viz., arrogance, desire, tears, laughter, malice, fear and anger mingle with joy which is the dominant mood, we call it 'kilakinchit'. (Ujjwal-Neelmani 11.44)
kishor	Age 10-15 years (Vidagdha-Mâdhav)
kumud	Lily
	L
lâvanya	1. A sparkling radiance. (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd in Srimad-Bhâgavatam 10.44.14) 2. A light emanates from the centre of the pearl-fruit, likewise when the body of a person is extremely clear, a sparkling effulgence emanates from it, and colorful light plays all around, we call it 'lâvanya'. – (Ujjwal-Neelmani 10.28)
	M
mâdan	Love is the essence of Hlâdini. When this prem exhibits all the symptoms of all the stages of love ranging from rati to mahâbhâv, is especially exultant, and dazzles more brilliantly that even mohan-bhâv, we call such a mood as 'mâdan-âkhyâ-mahâbhâv'. Only Srimati Râdhârâni possesses this bhâv.
madhur leelâ	1. divine pastimes that the devotees find sweet in relish 2. Sri Krishna's love-sports
mâdhuri	sweetness
mahat	great
mân	A mood of love-anger that stops the lovers from expressing love for each other. (Ujjwal-Neelmani 15.74-76).
manju mallâr râg	A sweet 'râg' sung in the monsoon season. It verily enchants Srimati Râdhârâni.
manvantar	1 manvantar = little more than 71 chaturyugs = 8 lakhs 52 thousand celestial years = 30 crores 76 lakhs 20 thousand earthly years. (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 3.11.24)
modan	1. pleasing (AC.13.45) 2. When Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna display the highest degree of brilliance in adhirudha mahâbhâv, we call it 'modan'. This mahâbhâv is exhibited by the members of Srimati Râdhârâni's group alone.

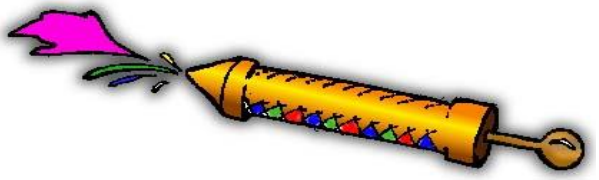
	(Ujjwal-Neelmani 14.103)
mohan	1. mesmerizing (Sri Brihad-Bhâgavatâmritam 1.4.83) 2. confusing (Gita.14.8) 3. During long-distance separation 'modan adhirudha mahâbhâv' attains 'mohan'. All symptoms of ecstasy are brilliant in this state.
mudrâ	1. symbol 2. gestures shown with the fingers
	N
nâyak	A male lover
nâyikâ	A woman in whom the erotic ras reposes.
niyam seva	Starting from the Ekadashi of the bright fortnight of the month of Âshwin, a devotee keeps vows lasting for one month. He serves Sri Bhagavân keeping some niyams or rules. If we do not keep Niyam during this month then we destroy whatever pious deeds we have accumulated in the past. Some of the activities we can perform are as follows – Put up sky-lantern and light lamp in it everyday, worship Sri Râdhâ-Dâmodar, worship Sri Govardhan and the cattle, celebrate Yamrâj's birthday (sister-brother day), and take out a rath-yâtra. (
nyâs	Mental appropriation or assignment of various parts of the body to tutelary deities.
	P
parakiyâ bhâv	A beloved is said to have parakiyâ-bhâv when she has an extra-marital relation with her lover.
paramahamsa	
pouganda	From 5 to 10 years of age (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 10.15.1), (Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu, 2.1.309).
poyâr	Bengali rhyming verses
pramâd	
prem	The desire to please Sri Krishna's senses (Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita, Âdi.4.165)
pronoy	A stage of love when the lovers consider themselves non different from each other. (Ujjwal-Neelmani14.108).
	R
râg	1. painting 2. rosyness (G.L.13.110) 3. beauty 4. love 5. true love arising out of real awareness of the other person's sweet qualities (Priti-sandarbha 74) 6. deep love and interest in Sri Bhagavân (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd in his commentary to Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu 1.2.6) 7. When we see the Deity or hear the tenth skandha of Srimad-Bhâgavatam, and we become greedy to perform bhajan. (Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd)
ras	When the mind and external senses come to a standstill and our heart feel with a joyful wonderment – a sense of "wow" – them it is *ras*. All the internal and external senses stop functioning and they cannot sense any object different from the '*ras*' – e.g. Although camphor, sugar, pepper etc (present in the dish called '*ras*âlâ') are different objects with different tastes, we relish them as one flavor. Ras manifests on its own in the especially pure and luminous heart of a devotee. It has only characteristic – bliss. When we hear and glorify repeatedly, we get 'rati' which is blissful. Later on this rati turns into *ras*. Then we get relish. The *ras*-experience is crores of times more blissful than the rati-experience. That is, we feel much more joy when we relish *ras* than what we feel in the rati-stage. In the state of *ras*-relish, we feel an ecstatic sense of wonderment. (Alankâr-Koustubh).
rati	1. interest (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd in Srimad-Bhâgavatam 1.2.8) 2. love (Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd in same)

	3. Erotic passion arising out of supreme and steadfast love that has reached its topmost level. (Sri Brihad-Bhâgavatâmritam 1.7.88) 4. bhakti (Stavamâlâ 3.1) 5. The wife Love-God Kandarpa.
	S
sadguru	A Spiritual Master who possesses all the qualities as prescribed in the scriptures.
sâdhu-sanga	Association of the devotees
samskâr	1. Desire (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 11.21.10) 2. the seed of desire (Swami in Srimad-Bhâgavatam 10.13.53) 3. Vedic purifying processes (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 10.8.6.) 4. cleaning by way of scrubbing and smearing (Sri Brihad-Bhâgavatâmritam 1.1.29) 5. the tendency of the mind that arises out of past memory (Bhakti-Sandarbha 1)
sâshtânga dandavat	To pay obeisance (= surrender) with 8 organs, viz., arms, feet, knees, chest, head, eyes, mind and speech.
sat-chit-ânanda	The One Who has sandhini, samvit and Hlâdini Shaktis (Sri Krishna-Leelâ-Stavah); the One Who is eternal, blissful and conscious.
shakti	1. Power, ability, strength, might, effort, energy, capability, faculty, skill, capacity; 2. Energy or active power of a deity personified as his wife. 3. The creative power or imagimation of a poet. 4. The female organ 5. The power or force of a mantra.
shesh	1. the remainder or residue, surplus, balance, all the rest 2. that which has to be supplied (e.g. to complete a sentence) 3. The thousand-headed serpent who forms the seat and canopy of Vishnu.
shruti	The sacred texts, the Vedas.
siddha-pranâli	Divine body or the body of an associate; the body that a devotee has to meditate upon, and it is given to him/her along with its various attributes by Sri Gurudev.
sphurti	An expression in the sub-conscious akin to actual meeting; a vision, but not actual meeting.
sthâyi-bhâv	A bhâv that has all other bhâvs under its control, be it non-opposing bhâvs such as humor, or opposing bhâvs such as anger. We can call passion for only Sri Krishna is sthayi-bhâv. 9brs 2.5.1-2)
sukriti	Pure devotion that has the power to please Sri Hari (G.L.8.8).
swarup	*Tattva*(BB.2.2.185); eternal natural form or personality (Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita,Madhya.17.131); the most complete form of Sri Bhagavân that we call as Leelâ-Purushottam (AC.2.19)
swayam bhagavân	The original form of truth that is independent of everything else.
	T
tâmbul	(m) Betel-leaf
tatasthâ	1. impartial (Vidagdha-Mâdhav) 2. situated on the shore (AC) 3. dexoid of shradhâ, yet fortunate (Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu 1.2.238) inexpert passion (GL 1.6)
tatasthâ shakti	The Jiva-shakti that resides under the screen of either the illusory potency (Mâyâ-shakti) or Sri Bhagavân's internal potency (Swarup-shakti) – (Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita, Madhya, 20.108).
tattva	
	U
upanishads	1. A class of philosophical writings, more than a hundred in number; their

	aim is the exposition of the secret meaning of the Vedas, and they are regarded as ht esource of the Vedânta and Sânkhya philosophies. 2. setting at rest ignorance by revealing the knowledge of the supreme spirit 3. the mystery which underlies the external system of things 4. esoteric doctrine
	V
vâmya	A bhâv that displays the nature 'vâmâ'. A 'vâmâ' beloved is one who is adverse, and always prone to *mân*. She gets angry if she loses her *mân.* Her lover fails to understand her and he odes not manage to subjugate her. Her speech is cruel. Srimati Râdhârâni is of this nature, and Lalita is the most extrovert, forthright and outspoken *vâmâ nâyikâ* in Her group.
varnâshram-dharma	The righteous conduct according to the particular occupational class and 'âshram', that is, brahmacharya (celibacy), gârhasta (householder), sannyâs (renounced) and vânaprastha (forest-dweller).
vibhâv	The total causes of rati-relish. (Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu 2.1.14-16)
vipralipsâ	1. The desire to prove a phenomenon or object as what it is not, in spite of it being self-evident. For e.g. if I take an object that looks, smells and tastes like an apple, yet I try to prove that it is not an apple. (Sarva-Samvâdini tattva 9) 2. The tendency to cheat.
vrata	1. rule 2. austerity 3. celibacy 4. vow 5. a son born to Châkshush Manu and Narbalâ.
vyâbhichâri bhâv	All the expressions that carries a devotee towards the sthâyi bhâv (Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu 2.4.1)
	Y
yog	1. samâdhi (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 1.3.2) 2. means (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd in Srimad-Bhâgavatam 1.9.24) 3. A son born to Dharma and Kriyâ (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 4.1.39) 4. A process of worship (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 6.4.32) 5. Inconceivable majesty (Srimat Jiva Goswâmipâd in Srimad-Bhâgavatam 10.50.57) 6. Yogmâyâ (Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd in same as above) 7. All activities to fulfill one's desire (Swami in Srimad-Bhâgavatam 10.64.29) 8. Sâyujya Mukti, that is, to merge into the Brahman (Sanâtan Goswâmi in same)
yug	1. A dress containing an upper cloth or *dupattâ* (Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu 2.1.348) 2. The time span of each – satya, Tretâ, dwâpar and kaliyug (Srimad-Bhâgavatam 3.11.18) 3. A length of four arms (Sri Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu 3.1.24)
yutheshwari	A sakhi who is a group leader.

Picture Plates

Shimuli Tree



Pichkari